

No 759

Dec. 18th 1912

GEORGE PARO
AUGUSTA ME.

5 Cents.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CAPTAIN JIM
and PILOT JOE

OR THE RIVAL
STEAMBOATS
OF
CROOKED LAKE

By Jas. C. Merritt

AUGUSTA ME.

AND OTHER STORIES



Another fearful gust struck the steamer; it threw Joe against Blanche. The rotten railing gave way, and in an instant Blanche went whirling down to the water, carrying Joe with her.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER. 158 W. 23rd ST. NEW-YORK

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AUGUSTA ME.

PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, November 7, 1898. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1912 in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 159 West 23d St., New York. New application for second-class entry pending.

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CAPTAIN JIM AND PILOT JOE

OR,

THE RIVAL STEAMBOATS OF CROOKED LAKE

By JAS. C. MERRITT

CHAPTER I.

THE START DOWN THE LAKE.

"Will you look at my watch for me, Mr. Stubbs. It seems to have stopped and I don't want to start down the lake without the time."

"Good-morning, my dear sir. Fine morning, is it not. I represent the house of Bennet & Burr, of Boston. I carry a fine line of chains, rings, pins—eh? Call a little later? All right, sir. I'll wait till you are disengaged."

"Oh, Mr. Stubbs! May I see them? Just one peep and I shall be ever and ever so much obliged! Not a word to father about my having been here. He would be so angry. Oh, thank you. I knew you wouldn't refuse me. Oh, oh! What dears! Aren't they charming? Did you ever see anything so perfectly lovely, Flora? Just to think in a few days they will be all mine!"

It was a busy morning for old Mr. Stubbs, the jeweler of the little town of Westlake, away out in Western New York.

Here were three persons all trying to gain his attention at once, and there were several others in the store besides.

No wonder the good man got a little "rattled;" any one would have done the same in his place.

But Mr. Stubbs was a man of sense and he always took things one at a time on an occasion like this.

Joe Harriman was of but small account, being the boy pilot of the slow going steamer Traveler, which for many moons had run between Westlake and Bowersville, at the foot of Crooked Lake, calling at Eastlake and Port Judd on the way.

Consequently, although the first to address the jeweler, he did not even receive an answer.

As for the drummer, he was promptly turned down, while Miss Blanche Millington, although the last of the three to enter the store, which she did in company with her friend Flora Brown, received the undivided attention of the man of trade, who opened his safe, and, taking out a small tray upon which reposed a brilliant display of diamonds in shape of necklace, pins, earrings, etc., laid it upon the glass showcase for the inspection of the young lady and her friend.

And for showing this preference Mr. Stubbs, the jeweler, cannot be blamed, for Blanche Millington was the only child

of the magnate of Westlake, Colonel James Millington, a retired millionaire railroad man and one of the best customers of his shop.

In a few days Miss Blanche was to be married to a wealthy young New Yorker, and in honor of the occasion her father was about to present her with a set of diamond jewelry said to be worth \$10,000 at least.

As Colonel Millington was a great believer in encouraging local business, instead of going to New York to buy the diamonds himself, as most men in his position would have done, he intrusted the commission to Mr. Stubbs, and the sparkling gems upon the tray were the result.

Now, of course, all this was intended to be a secret and equally, of course, the secret was not kept. As Mr. Stubbs was well aware that Blanche knew all about the arrival of the diamonds, he could not refuse to show them to her, and while the young lady and her friend were admiring them he returned to wait on several other customers who had happened in, all anxious for attention before the steamer sailed.

Among these was young James Merton, son of the magnate of Eastlake, the principal town on the other side of Crooked Lake.

Jim was a bright boy, but he felt his position and was apt to be dictatorial. He could not forget that he was the only son of Admiral Merton, U. S. N., and he was a little too fond of reminding people of it and showing his authority in various ways.

The other visitors were mostly persons after the New York morning papers, for there was a newspaper and stationery counter on the other side of the store.

Altogether there were about fifteen persons in Mr. Stubbs' store that morning, and we want this particularly noted in order that what is to follow may be definitely understood.

Finding that he could get no attention from Mr. Stubbs, Joe Harriman left the store and started for the wharf.

Joe was not interested in diamonds. He had never owned one, being only a poor boy of eighteen and the son of an honest, hard working widow, nor did he ever expect to be troubled with any, but he was the very soul of punctuality, and as the Traveler was supposed to sail at eight o'clock and it was now quarter of, there did not seem to be any time to wait listening to the rhapsodies of Miss Blanche, who, in

order to have a sly peep at the gems, had probably risen earlier than she had ever done before in her life.

"Hurry up there you, Joe!" shouted old Captain Tupper from the deck of the Traveler as the young pilot came down the wharf. "I want you to make the run to Bowlersville this morning. I've had the cramps all night and I'm not fit to be up, no I hain't none."

"All right, sir," replied Joe, respectfully. "I can do it. You had better go back home. I'll see that everything is O. K."

Pilot Joe did not seem to be a bit disturbed over the prospect and there was no particular reason why he should be, since this sort of thing happened four mornings out of six.

Some folks said that if old Cap. Tupper would not drink so much whisky over night he would not be so often troubled with cramps in the morning, but this was none of Joe's business and he did not propose to trouble his head about the old man's private affairs.

So Joe popped down into the engine-room and exchanged a word with Charley Crane, the engineer.

When he came on deck he found Cap. Tupper still there, smelling very strong of peppermint or something else.

"Oh, by the way, Joe," he said, "there's a new order from the boss. We are not to stop at Eastlake on the down trip."

"Hello!" cried Joe. "That will make some one mad."

"Of course it's part of the quarrel between Colonel Millington and Admiral Merton," said Captain Tupper, "but we have nothing to do with that. As long as the colonel is president of the company it belongs to us to obey him. Obey orders if you break owners, you know, my boy. Come, now, it's time to ring the bell."

Now Joe was not only pilot, but acting captain, brevet bell-ringer, chief shouter, and, as he expressed it, "every other old thing."

"All ashore that's going ashore!" he shouted now, and then while a few of the Westlake folks who had come to say good-by to their friends went hurrying down the gangplank, Joe was pulling away on the bell rope, making noise enough surely, when all of a sudden a loud explosion burst upon the little town of Westlake and smoke came pouring out of the windows over Mr. Stubbs' store."

"My!" cried Joe, "something has blown up! What in the world can it be?"

Men and boys could be seen running toward the jeweler's and the people came pouring out of every other store on Main street.

Joe would have liked nothing better than to have joined the crowd, but such a thing was not to be thought of, for the sailing time had now come.

"All aboard! All aboard! Pull in there! Lively, now, boys! That's the talk! Wait! Here comes three more!"

Two boys and one man came running down the wharf.

The man was the drummer whom Joe had seen in the jewelry store. One of the boys was no less a personage than young James Merton, the admiral's son and heir, while the other was a slightly built, foreign-looking fellow of about Joe's own age, whom he did not remember ever to have seen before, evidently a stranger in town.

"Hold on there, Joe! Don't you go away without me!" roared Jim Merton. "You knew I was coming. Why in thunder didn't you wait?"

"I am waiting," replied Joe, as the representative of the house of Bennet & Burr, of Boston, with his two huge grips, was unceremoniously hustled on board.

"But you were going!" bawled Jim. "I'll report you for this. 'Tisn't eight o'clock yet."

"My clock says two minutes past," said Joe, stoutly. "I can't hold the Traveler for any man."

"You'll hold it for me when I say so, then," said Jim, "and Blanche Millington and Flora Brown are coming, too. Don't you be too fresh or I'll punch your head."

Here was a challenge if ever there was one.

Jim and Joe were old schoolmates and had in their early boyhood been fast friends.

It was not so now, however.

The rich man's son, with his fine clothes, his private tutor, his horses and boats and everything else that money could buy, had long since turned up his nose at the widow's son, who had to work for his living or not get it.

If ever there was a spoiled boy Jim Merton was one.

Privately it may be confessed that he had been dropped from the roll of two colleges for idleness and his dictatorial ways, and the boys of Westlake declared that the only thing he learned at the last one was the "manly art of self-defence," since which time Jim had been extremely "handy with his fists."

"I suppose I've got to wait," thought Joe, for Miss Blanche and her friend had now appeared at the head of the wharf.

And he not only waited, but personally went down to the gangplank and helped the ladies aboard.

Jim stood glaring at him. He did not even raise his hat to Blanche, although he had known her ever since he could remember, for there was war between the magnates of Eastlake and Westlake and the families of Admiral Merton and Colonel Millington were not on speaking terms.

"Let her go!" shouted Joe to Bob Sanders, the mate, who had charge of the wheel, and then, as the clumsy old Traveler moved away from the wharf he ran up to the pilot-house to take his place.

"Good job Jim didn't want to fight before the ladies," thought Joe. "I guess he thought twice about it. Thank fortune that trouble has blown over all right."

Perhaps it had, but there was more trouble in the wind.

Joe had forgotten the new order. It had not occurred to him that the steamer was not to stop at Eastlake and that was precisely where Jim Merton wanted to go.

CHAPTER II.

HIGH-HANDED WORK.

Joe ran the steamer out into the lake clear of the Ripraps, as an ugly ledge of rocks close by the wharf was called, and then heading her down the lake turned the wheel over to Bob again and went out of the pilot-house to collect his tickets.

This was the usual way of working when Captain Tupper had the cramps.

Blanche and Flora Brown paid through to Bowlersville, as they were on their way to Rochester on a shopping expedition, and intended to take the train for that city at the foot of the lake.

Some of the others had tickets for Port Judd, or other landings further down the lake, but the majority were through passengers.

The drummer paid to Bowlersville with a crisp new five-dollar bill and then Joe started on to the foreign-looking young man, who had been one of the last to come aboard.

"By the way, what was that explosion?" he asked, looking back at the drummer.

"Don't know, I'm sure. It was upstairs over the jewelry store," was the reply. "It gave everybody an awful scare, for the ceiling came tumbling down. I saw I couldn't do any business there this morning so I just lit out."

"There's a chemist upstairs there," said Joe. "They say he's experimenting on a new kind of dynamite; everybody has been expecting something of the sort."

"It spoiled a new silk hat on me all right," said the drummer, taking off a badly damaged tile and looking at it ruefully. "I suppose I ought to be thankful it wasn't my head."

Joe passed on to the young stranger.

"Ticket!" he said, stopping in front of the boy, whose shabby clothes and well-worn shoes did not seem to indicate a pocket very well lined.

"I haven't any ticket," was the reply. "I want to go to Bowlersville. What is the fare?"

"Three dollars and a half."

The boy's face fell.

"I didn't suppose it was so much," he said, nervously. "I—I've got two dollars. I thought it would be enough. I'm in hard luck. I've been looking for work, and——"

"You'll have to pay the fare or get off at Port Judd," said Joe, "unless you want to pay as far as your two dollars will go."

"How far is that?"

"Dillsburg."

"Is it much of a place?"

"Why, it's no place at all, only a wharf and a store."

"No chance of my striking a job there?"

"None whatever unless you want to tramp back among the farmers. You might catch on with one of them."

"I am afraid it's no use," replied the boy. "I've tried lots of them. They won't have me. They say I'm not strong enough. How is Port Judd?"

"Just the same. There's two stores there, though."

"And Bowlersville?"

"Oh, that's quite a town."

"Well, I had better get off at Port Judd and walk the rest of the way," sighed the boy, with a rueful look at his shoes.

"What's your name?" asked Joe, sympathetically.

"Nat Du Flow."

"Where are you from?"

"Oh, I'm from New York. I'm in hard lines and that's all there is to it. If you will put me through to Bowlersville I'll surely send you the dollar and a half the first money I get."

"Well, keep out my way," said Joe, "that's all."

"Here's the two dollars, mister."

But Joe pretended not to hear and he moved on toward Jim Merton, who was standing at the rail looking off on the lake.

"There's going to be trouble," he thought, suddenly recollecting the order of Captain Tupper. "Pshaw! I wish I had thought of it before! I ought not to have let Jim Merton come aboard."

It really was a pity that Pilot Joe had not kept his wits about him and given Jim the tip about the new arrangement.

Not that it would have avoided the trouble by any means, for Jim, who had been spending the night in Westlake with a friend, would have been pretty sure to kick anyhow, but there is no question that it would have been the right and proper thing to do.

No wonder Joe hesitated, for Jim was certain to kick up a row, but while he hesitated other trouble was coming which may as well be mentioned here.

It was early in the month of June, the season of the year when thunderstorms grow, and one was growing now as fast as it could.

While Joe paused to pull himself together he also looked off at the weather and saw by the gathering clouds that there was going to be lively work in a few moments.

He also saw something else which attracted his attention and that was a small pleasure steamer—a little affair not much bigger than a good-sized rowboat—putting off from Westlake wharf.

"Hello! There comes the Midget," thought Joe. "I wonder who can be taking her out? Whoever it is had better look sharp or they will have a lively time of it in this blow."

There was a lively time right at hand for Joe himself, for Jim Merton suddenly turned and saw him.

"Hello! You here," he said, in no very pleasant tone. "You want your ticket, I suppose?"

"Well, Jim, I'm taking up tickets, but I want to explain something," replied Joe. "There's a new order. We don't stop at Eastlake on the down trip. Seeing that you didn't know, I'll carry you through to Bowlersville on the same fare and bring you back again. I'm sorry, but——"

"What!" cried Jim. "What's that you say? Take me to Bowlersville? I guess not! You land me at Eastlake wharf, Joe Harriman, that's what you'll do."

"Can't do it, Jim. I'm awfully sorry, but——"

"There's no but about it," stormed the "Little Admiral," as the boys liked to call him. "I guess my father is one of the principal owners in this line. I'd like to see you carry me down the lake."

"Those are Colonel Millington's latest orders, Jim. I've nothing to do but obey."

"You'd better not try it, then. My father is as big a stockholder in the line as old Millington. Where's Captain Tupper? I'll soon see about this."

"Captain Tupper is home sick," said Joe. "I'm very sorry, but the Traveler can't stop at Eastlake this morning, Jim. I'll speak to Colonel Millington about it when I see him. I don't think much of the arrangement myself."

"Speak and be blamed!" snapped Jim. "Don't give me any more of your talk. The Traveler stops at Eastlake if I stop her there myself."

Joe said no more. In fact he felt that he had got off easy; he had been half afraid that Jim would actually try to practice his newly acquired "manly art, etc.," upon him.

"He's all wind after all," he said to himself, as he turned away. "He won't do anything but sputter. I suppose there'll be a big row about it, though. I wouldn't dare to ask him to pay a cent as it is."

Joe hurried below to give a few orders to the deck hands about protecting the freight on the lower deck against the coming storm.

It is all plain sailing on Crooked Lake if you strike right down to Bowlersville, but if you turn off to make the stop at Eastlake you have got to look out for the shoals off Weasel Island, which is a very bad spot.

The usual course of the Traveler was to run around on the outside of the island and strike right down to Eastlake wharf.

Another and shorter way, but far more dangerous, was to go through the "Turkey's Neck," a narrow, winding passage, scarcely wide enough in places to allow the steamer to pass and full of rocks and shoals.

It was all right to put a sailboat through the Turkey's Neck, and that was the way pleasure boats and fishermen usually went, but when it came to the clumsy old Traveler that was quite another thing.

Having arranged matters below, Joe hurried on deck to take the wheel himself, for the storm was now close at hand.

As he went toward the pilot-house he saw that the Midget was striking right across the lake with the evident intention of passing in front of them.

"I've got to look out for her or there may be a collision,"

thought Joe. "Hello! What in thunder, Bob! Who's got the wheel?"

He had turned around suddenly, and, to his utter astonishment, saw Bob Sanders with his face all covered with blood hurrying toward him along the deck.

"Oh, Joe!" he exclaimed, "Jim Merton has knocked me out and taken the wheel away. He says he is going to run the steamer through the Turkey's Neck to Eastlake if he runs her on the rocks."

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE IN THE TURKEY'S NECK.

"What!" cried Joe, and off he flew toward the pilot-house, reaching the door with three great bounds.

But he was too late to interfere with Jim's mad intention, for they were already running alongside of Weasel Island and before Joe could make the pilot-house, quick as his movements were, Jim had given his wheel a sharp twist, sending the Traveler into the Turkey's Neck.

"Open that door!" shouted Joe. "What in thunder do you mean, Jim Merton? How dare you touch that wheel?"

"Go to thunder!" snarled Jim, who had taken the precaution to hasp the door.

He was safe for the moment, for the pilot-house was rather a large one, and, although the window was open, Joe could not reach him from the outside.

But Joe was not to be turned from his purpose in this way.

A sharp flash of lightning shot through the darkened sky as he tried the pilot-house door, quickly followed by a deafening clap of thunder, and all in the same moment a furious gust of wind struck the steamer broadside, almost throwing her against the rocks.

Joe was terribly frightened. Not on his own account at all, but for the passengers in his charge.

"For heaven's sake, what would you do, Jim? Drown us all?" he cried. "Open the door! Open the door or you'll have the steamer on the rocks! You can't steer her through the Turkey's Neck to save your soul!"

"Who says I can't? Go about your business. I'm running this boat now!" cried Jim, and it is only due to him to say that he did manage to bring the Traveler back into the channel.

"I'm as good a pilot as you, Joe Harriman, any day in the week," he added then.

Joe waited for nothing further.

Putting his hands on the window-sill he threw his legs over and dropped into the pilot-house, dodging the blow aimed at him by Jim.

"Call up the boys, Bob," he shouted to Bob Sanders, who came up then. "I may want help here."

He needed it already.

Furious with rage, Jim let go the wheel and squared off at Joe.

"Come on if you want to fight," he shouted, as another deafening crash of thunder broke. "I'll show you that Admiral Merton's son has some rights on board this boat."

"And I'll teach you to mind your own business, Jim Merton!" cried Joe, dodging the blow and seizing him by the throat.

That was the time when Jim found out that a tough, wiry frame and plenty of muscle was quite as good as professional training in a righteous cause.

The next he knew he "didn't know nothing," as Bob San-

ders expressed it, for he went flying against the side of the pilot-house, striking his head with fearful force, and fell down in a heap.

Joe lost not a second.

Seizing the wheel, he gave it a violent twist to port and threw all his strength into one mighty effort to keep the steamer off the Weasel Island ledges.

It was too late.

But for the wind, which was now blowing furiously, it might have been accomplished; as it was the rotten old craft went grinding on the ledges, tearing a big hole in her bottom and keeling away over to starboard with a suddenness and a force which sent the frightened passengers tumbling every which way and shifted the cargo so that it was impossible for her to right.

"That settles the Traveler!" cried Joe, bitterly. "That's what this fool has done!"

He pulled the bell violently, but it was not necessary, for Charley Crane had sense enough to stop his engine the moment the shock came.

"Oh, Joe! Have you killed him?" gasped Bob.

"Don't know," said Joe, unhasping the door and rushing out.

"Stand by the wheel, Bob!" he shouted. "I must find out how she lies."

The rain was dashing in his face with blinding force, and the wind blew so that he could scarcely keep his feet.

But it was worse below, for the water was now rushing into the cabin and upon the lower deck, which sent the passengers crowding to the promenade deck above.

They came up both fore and aft and Joe ran right into them.

"Are we sinking? Are we sinking?" was the cry.

Then it was, "Lower the boats. Where's Captain Tupper? What's the matter? What's to be done?" and a dozen other cries.

"Gentlemen, keep cool!" yelled Joe, his voice scarcely audible above the howling of the wind. "Get over on the other side. Get over quick. We may right her and run in shore."

Many made the move, but others clung to the railing, half paralyzed with fear.

Among these were Miss Blanche Millington and her friend, Flora Brown.

"Oh, Joe! Save us!" cried the former, seizing Joe's arm as he hurried past.

At the same instant another fearful gust struck the steamer.

It threw her over still further and it threw Joe against Blanche with terrible force; the rotten old railing behind the girl gave way and all in an instant she went whirling down into the water, carrying Joe with her, for she still kept hold of his arm.

Flora screamed and several men tried to seize hold of them, but it was too late; they were struggling in the water before any one could lend a hand.

"Joe! Joe! Save me, Joe!" screamed the frightened girl, throwing her arms about the young pilot's neck.

There was ten feet of water between the ledge and the island, where they had fallen, and Joe saw that they would both surely drown unless something was done.

"Take your hands off of me!" he shouted. "Take them off. I'll save you. There; that's better. Let me hold you by the back of the head—so. Keep cool, Miss Blanche, and it will be all right."

And Blanche was cool now—wonderfully so, once she got control of herself.

"I'll do anything you say, Joe," she gasped, "but I can't swim."

"That's all right. I'll do the swimming for both of us. Hello! What have we here?"

Suddenly a little steamer came puffing along the Turkey's Neck.

It was the Midget.

There were several men on board of her; all were looking at Joe and Blanche.

"Hello! Hello! On board the Midget! Throw us a line!" shouted Joe, supporting Blanche the best he could.

The line came whizzing out to them and the little steamer slowed down. Catching the rope, Joe made it fast under Blanche's arms and she was drawn aboard by Constable Coons, although Joe did not recognize the man until he climbed aboard himself.

"For heaven's sake, Joe Harriman, what have you been doing to the Traveler?" cried the constable.

"Wrecking her," replied Joe, bitterly. "It's not my doings, though, Mr. Coons. I——"

"Hold on, Joe," the constable broke in. "You had better not say too much. You and I have a little business to transact, boy. Miss Millington's diamonds have been stolen from Mr. Stubbs' store and my orders are to put you under arrest."

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER ARREST.

If ever there was an indignant young lady in the neighborhood of Crooked Lake it was Miss Blanche Millington after the announcement of Constable Coons.

"Why, it's an outrage!" she cried. "My diamonds stolen. Don't believe it! Even if it is true, Joe never took them! How could he when he was on board the steamer? You might as well accuse me of stealing them myself! I say it is a shame!"

"There, there, Miss Millington! Keep cool! Don't excite yourself," said the constable, and then Blanche, angrier than ever, broke out again:

Tell her to keep cool when she was already wet to the skin! What nonsense! Hadn't Joe saved her life? Joe was a brave fellow! Did he blow up Mr. Stubbs' store? Rubbish! It was a shame to accuse him! She would tell her father and he would sue whoever started the story for libel, etc., until her breath was gone.

This was the way Blanche went on, while Joe, pale and calm, but greatly disturbed, stood there unable to get in a word.

"No, Miss Millington, it must not be so," he began when at last Blanche had calmed down a little. "I was in Mr. Stubbs' store, although I don't think you saw me. If I am accused of stealing the diamonds I prefer to be arrested. My style is to face the music. I shall insist upon this charge being thoroughly investigated. I'm only a poor boy and all I've got is my character. I don't propose to see that attacked."

"That's the talk, Joe," said the constable. "Spoken like a man. Now let me explain. Stubbs has sworn out warrants against everybody in the store. There's yourself and a Boston drummer and a young fellow who was wandering about Westlake this morning looking for work. You were all there and all he wants is to find out the thief."

"How about Jim Merton? He was there, too," said Joe.

"Oh, well, of course, no one would think of accusing Admiral Merton's son," said the constable. "That would be absurd."

"Not a bit more absurd than to accuse me."

"Or, me either," put in Blanche. "I insist upon being arrested, too, and there's my friend, Flora Brown. When did Mr. Stubbs miss the diamonds? Was it before the explosion or afterward? Was it——"

"Now, now! Don't begin again, Miss Millington," interrupted the constable. "It was before the explosion that the diamonds were missed. You and Miss Brown walked out and left the tray on the showcase. Mr. Stubbs was busy at the time and did not observe that you had gone out. When he discovered this he hurried up to that end of the store to put the tray back in the safe and then found that the diamonds were gone. That's the story as far as I know it. Mind you, I'm only carrying out my orders and can't do any different even if I wanted to—I hope you understand."

Now, all this time the storm was getting in its finishing touches and it need not be supposed that nothing was being done to put the passengers on board the Traveler at their ease.

There were several men on board the Midget besides Constable Coons, and the little boat was now up alongside the wreck.

But there was nothing to be done in the life saving line.

Before the constable had finished his talk the storm blew over altogether and the wind, dying down, left the steamer fast on the ledges with no immediate danger of sinking. Weasel Island was only a stone's throw away and with four stout boats at the service of the passengers, there really was no danger at all.

"We had better take these passengers back to Westlake, constable," said the owner of the Midget, who was in charge of the boat.

The constable offered no objection. He had his arrests to make first, however.

Joe had explained that the drummer was on board the Traveler and also the boy Nat Du Flow.

He told also about the cause of the accident and explained what had happened to Jim Merton.

"Come," said Mr. Coons, "somebody has got to look after this steamer and you are the proper one to do it, Joe. If you will promise me not to try to escape I'll let my assistant take those other two fellows back to Westlake and you and I will stop here and see this job through."

Joe gave the promise readily enough.

He and the constable then went on board the Traveler.

"Well, where is the drummer and where is that boy?" was Mr. Coons' first question as he looked around among the passengers, who had all collected in the gangway as the Midget came alongside.

It was a question which was not answered.

The constable searched the steamer from stem to stern, but neither the drummer nor the boy could be found.

Joe speedily discovered that two of the boats were missing, however.

One had disappeared altogether, but the other could now be seen being pulled up the Turkey's Neck toward Eastlake, and when Joe turned his glass upon it he saw that one of the deck-hands was doing the pulling and Jim Merton sat in the stern.

"Yes, that's Jim," said Bob Sanders, coming up at this moment. "He pulled himself together after you went overboard, Joe, and just walked out of the pilot-house. Next thing I knew I saw them in the boat out there. Of course Jim has put up heavy for it. The little coward! He didn't dare to stay and face the consequences of his dirty work."

This explained about one boat, but it did not explain about the other.

Nobody had seen it go and nobody could give any information about the drummer and the boy.

"One of them is the thief sure!" declared Mr. Coons, and he stuck to his conclusion and expressed it to everybody when the passengers were landed at Westlake by the Midget.

There was great excitement in town, for the accident to the Traveler had been seen by a fishing party which came in ahead of the Midget and spread the news.

There was a great crowd on the wharf to meet the little steamer, and among the rest was Colonel Millington, who could hardly wait for the passengers to come ashore, he was so anxious about Blanche.

Meanwhile the constable had changed his mind and brought Joe back a prisoner after all, leaving the Traveler in charge of Bob Sanders, Charley Crane and the deck-hands.

The people were crowding around Blanche, Flora and the other passengers when Mr. Coons started up the wharf with his hand on Joe's arm.

"There's the fellow who did the business!" cried Captain Tupper, who came staggering down the wharf at the same time. "That boy ought to be arrested. He was crazy to try to take the Traveler through the Turkey's Neck!"

The old man was in a fearful rage and very drunk.

He aimed a blow at Joe, and, losing his balance, fell on his nose, to the great delight of the crowd.

"Do get me to the lock-up as soon as you can, Mr. Coons," whispered Joe, who felt all this disgrace keenly. "I don't want to face these people. Let's hurry along."

But the word had already gone around that Joe had been arrested, and as he was now discovered the people came crowding about, blocking the constable's path.

"Stand back there, all of you!" Mr. Coons shouted. "Make room for me to pass with my prisoner!"

The crowd gave way and the constable was just making a fresh start when Colonel Millington, with Blanche and Flora, elbowed his way to the front.

"Hold on, there!" he cried in his pompous way. "What are you doing with that boy, Mr. Coons? How dare you arrest that brave young fellow who saved my daughter's life? Let go of his arm instantly or it shall cost you your office if it costs me my last dollar to get you out. Here, Joe Harriman, shake hands. I know all about this business. Show me the man who dares to accuse you of stealing the diamonds and he shall hear from me!"

Then the big man of Westlake seized Joe's hand and shook it heartily.

"You can follow us if you are afraid of your prisoner, Mr. Coons," cried the colonel. "Blanche and I will take Joe before the magistrate and I want you to understand that I am prepared to go bail for him to any amount."

"Hooray for Colonel Millington!" roared a voice in the crowd, and cheer upon cheer rang out.

"Hooray for Joe Harriman!" shouted the colonel, taking off his hat and waving it. "Hip! Hip! Hooray!"

It was three cheers and a tiger then and the whole crowd joined in most heartily.

Instead of going uptown a prisoner in the clutches of the constable it was more like a triumphal procession, when Joe and Blanche, in their wet clothes, walked up the wharf, with Mr. Coons trotting on behind the big man of Westlake like a little dog.

CHAPTER V.

LUCK CHANGES FOR PILOT JOE.

"Dear me," sighed the Widow Harriman; "dear me, this is really a very bad state of affairs. I'm sure, Joseph, I don't know what we are going to do if you don't find work soon, ton——"

Here's the grocer sends in his bill with word that until it is paid he cannot supply us with anything more; as for the butcher, you know that we haven't had a piece of meat in the house for a week, simply because we haven't got the money to pay for it. The landlord was here yesterday afternoon after his rent, and——"

Joe jumped up from the breakfast table and, seizing his hat, clapped it on his head.

"Now, mother, please stop. You really must stop!" he exclaimed. "I can't bear it—really I can't. You know perfectly well that I am trying to do the best I can."

The widow began to shed tears and to wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"That's always the way with you, Joseph," she said, complainingly. "You are always right, and, of course, I am always wrong. Here you go and get into a quarrel with Jimmy Merton, which results in the steamer being wrecked in the Chicken's Throat, or whatever you call that dreadful place out on the lake, and then you have to go and get arrested for stealing diamonds, and——"

"Mother!" cried Joe, turning very pale, "do you mean to accuse me of stealing the diamonds? You, of all persons! You, when everybody else believes in my entire innocence! Oh, mother! I would not have thought it! How can you say such a thing?"

Now, the truth was Mrs. Harriman had no more idea of accusing her son of being a thief than she had of flying, but she was naturally of a complaining turn of mind and all her life had been a great fault finder.

The neighbors said that she drove Joe's father into his grave with her perpetual whining, but be this as it might, she had certainly made it very hard for Joe ever since he could remember, and she was making it hard for him now.

"Oh, my gracious, that's the way you always go on, Joseph," continued the widow. "You are your father over again, always accusing me of things I never dreamed of doing. Did I say I believed you stole Blanche Millington's diamonds? Of course I never said anything of the sort, as you must know perfectly well if you will only stop to reflect. The trouble with you is that you never will reflect. What I did say was that now that you were accused of stealing the diamonds no one will give you anything to do, and for the last six weeks you have been living on the promises of Colonel Millington to do something for you, which he never will do. These rich men don't care for anybody but themselves. What you ought to do is to go to work at the first thing you can find and bring in some money, and——"

"Mother, mother! Do stop!" cried Joe. "You know the situation. I've told you a dozen times. Colonel Millington has decided that the Traveler is too old and rotten to be worth repairing and he is going to leave her where she is. Just as soon as he can make arrangements he is going to do something for me. He has given me his promise and I believe he will keep it, too."

"He never will," persisted the widow. "You can see for yourself what he is. Didn't he refuse to do anything for poor Mrs. Tupper, when her husband had served him for years and has now lost his position?"

"But, mother, Captain Tupper is three hundred dollars short in his accounts and it was all owing to him that the steamboat line has run down so that everybody preferred to take the stage to Bowlersville."

"I don't know about that," persisted the widow. "It wasn't Captain Tupper's fault that the steamer was wrecked in the Goose's Windpipe, or whatever you call that place; it was yours. If you hadn't got into that quarrel with Jimmy Merton——"

It was no use. Poor Joe could not stand it any longer. He was well used to these lectures and knew there would be no end to this one, so he turned abruptly away and hurried out of the house.

It was hard on Joe. He felt just as discouraged as a boy could be. Here he was out on \$1,000 bail accused of stealing Miss Millington's diamonds, the bail, oddly enough, being furnished by the father of the young lady who had suffered from the theft.

Of course few believed Joe guilty, least of all Blanche, who was now married to young Mr. Collyer and had gone away to New York, but Mr. Stubbs was a pig-headed, vindictive man and he persisted in the matter against all reason, although there was not a shadow of evidence against Joe.

"The case is sure to be dismissed when it comes up for trial, Colonel Millington's lawyer had declared, but in the meanwhile nobody seemed to want to engage Joe's services, which made it rather hard.

Indeed, the only person who gave Joe any encouragement was Colonel Millington himself.

"Wait, my boy. Be patient," he said. "This thing is going to come out all right in the end and very shortly. I shall have something for you to do."

But not a word had Colonel Millington said about rewarding Joe for the service he had performed to Blanche, and it must be admitted that Joe sometimes felt that if the colonel had handed him a check for a hundred dollars it would have come in very handy just about this time.

Now we have written about all this at length because it is necessary to understand Joe's situation in order that what follows may be understood.

Probably at no time since the accident had Joe felt so thoroughly discouraged as he did that morning when he walked down Main street with the intention of going aboard his own sailboat, the Kitty, and going fishing, for it was really necessary to bring home something to eat, and the poor boy had not a cent to his name.

Joe was just turning down Short street, which would take him to the place on the lake front where his boat was moored, when Colonel Millington's carriage suddenly came dashing down Main street and he heard his name called.

"Joe! Joe! Hold up! I want to speak to you!"

It was the colonel himself. The big man of Westlake seemed to be in an unusually cheerful mood that morning and he held out his hand and gave Joe's a hearty shake.

"Tired of waiting for me to fulfill my promise, young man?" he asked.

"I'm tired of doing nothing, sir," replied Joe. "I was brought up to work and I must say I don't relish loafing around."

"Just so. Well, everything comes to him who waits, they say. I think I've got a job for you at last. Come up into my office and we will talk it over. I suppose you have heard the latest news?"

Joe flushed. "The diamond thief has been discovered, sir?" he asked, eagerly.

"No, not that, though I wish for your sake it was so," replied the colonel, who had left the carriage and was now walking with Joe toward Central Block, where his office was. "There's going to be a new steamboat line started on Crooked Lake next week."

"No!" cried Joe, and his heart sank.

Although Colonel Millington had never said so, he had been in hopes that he meant to build a new boat and place him in charge of it, but this seemed to send his hopes flying to the winds.

"Yes," continued the colonel. "My dear friend, Admiral

Merton, out of pure spite against me has bought the steamer which used to run on Geneva Lake and has run her up to Bowlersville, where she has been all fitted up in great shape. Her name is to be the White Cross. She is to run between Eastlake and Bowlersville via Port Judd, stopping at all the old landings and giving Westlake a wide berth. Jim Merton, through his father's influence, has obtained a captain's certificate and is to be put in command; all of which is in revenge for the suit I have brought against the admiral for the damage done to the Traveler by his boy's carelessness. Nice piece of business, isn't it? Ah, Mr. Worrington, how are you? Yes, I'm going up to the office. Joe, you will have to excuse me, but it don't matter. Take this letter and run down to Bowlersville on the Kitty. You will get your instructions from Mr. Beasley, to whom it is addressed, and take this, too, and buy yourself a new suit of clothes, hat, shoes and—and anything else you need. Good-day."

And off went Colonel Millington arm in arm with the gentleman who had caused the interruption, leaving Joe standing on the sidewalk with a roll of ten-dollar bills in his hand.

Had luck changed for Pilot Joe?

Well, it began to look very much that way, but there was more of it to come in Bowlersville, as Joe was very soon to learn.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN JIM MAKES HIS TRIAL TRIP.

"Hello, Joe! Where are you off to now?" exclaimed Bob Sanders, just as Joe was getting up sail on the Kitty preparatory to his start for Bowlersville to deliver the colonel's letter.

Joe had stopped only to run home and give his mother half the money, which brought out no more grateful remark from that fretful woman than:

"Well, I'm glad the colonel has done the right thing at last."

Now the young pilot of Crooked Lake was ready for business without having any idea of what said business really was.

"Oh, I'm going down to Bowlersville for Colonel Millington," replied Joe. "Want to come along?"

"Sure," replied Bob. "I've nothing to do to-day, or any other day for that matter. Haven't had three days' work since the old Traveler went on the rocks."

"And I haven't had one, worse luck," sighed Joe, "but it can't be helped. S'pose you've heard the news?"

Bob had not heard the news and he was duly surprised when Joe went on to tell about the new line.

"The colonel will have a boat to run against the admiral, and that's sure," declared Bob.

"Think so?"

"I'm sure of it."

"I wish I was, then. I might look for a job."

"It will come, now. You mark my words. Say, Joe, has anything been heard of the drummer or that boy?"

"Nothing, worse luck," replied Joe. "Last accounts were that the drummer was still missing. He has never reported to his firm since that night. He had a big stock of diamonds and jewelry with him and the detectives think he must have sloped for California or somewhere else. As for the boy, I don't suppose they will ever find him."

"I s'pose not," replied Bob. "He was only a tramp, anyway. Of course the drummer stole the diamonds. He stayed

in the store ten minutes after you had left. Besides, he knew their value, and, by gracious, Joe, here comes the new steamer now!"

Sure enough, there, away down the lake, was as pretty a little steamer as Joe had ever laid eyes on, coming up under full steam, with flags flying and a band playing on the after deck.

"It's the White Cross sure!" cried Bob. "Isn't she a beauty? By gracious, Joe, I'd like to be mate of her, and hang me if I don't apply for the job."

"You won't get it, then," laughed Joe. "Do you suppose Admiral Merton would give the position to any Westlake fellow? Well, I guess not."

"What's the matter with moving over to Eastlake?"

"Would your father go?"

"Mebbe. The admiral once offered him a job in the mill over there and he might do it again. Say, Joe, why don't you strike for a job on the boat yourself?"

"Well, you may be willing to work under Jim Merton, but I'll be hanged if I care to try it."

"He is a little tryant and that's right, but you say he was very civil to you when you ran into him the other day?"

"Why, yes," replied Joe, "and that's not like Jim, either. He came up to me and apologized. He admitted that he had no business to take the wheel away from you."

"Did you accept his apology? Did you meet him half way? I'd like to kick him myself."

"Well, I was as pleasant as I could be, Bob. Jim got me into a lot of trouble and I can't see that his repentance does me much good now."

"That's just it. Did he say anything about running off with the rowboat?"

"No; he didn't allude to that, nor did I. You know, the boat was sent back, and—by gracious, it is a pretty steamer and no mistake!"

They had now come almost abreast of the dainty new craft.

Jim was at the wheel and the boys could see Admiral Merton among the ladies and gentlemen upon the deck. As Jim held his course he would have to pass very close to the Kitty unless she went on the other tack sooner than the occasion required. This Joe had no notion of doing and he continued to keep the sailboat well in the wind, for he had a natural curiosity to get a good view of the White Cross.

As the boys drew nearer Captain Jim spied them, which, indeed, he might well have done sooner, if he had not been so much occupied with his wheel.

"Kitty ahoy!" he shouted. "Hello, Joe! Say, how's this?"

Certainly Captain Jim's tone was friendly, considering; it was almost like the old times when he and Joe were chums.

"That boat is all right!" Joe shouted back, "but you ought to give us Westlake fellows a chance on her once in a while."

"She'll never stop at Westlake!" shouted Jim, giving his wheel a twist to starboard, which, considering that she was running past the sunken ledges, a well-known obstruction in Crooked Lake, was a crazy thing to do.

Now the fact was Captain Jim, in spite of the papers which his father's money had procured him, knew nothing of this danger, and the old admiral himself was equally ignorant of it, but Joe knew Crooked Lake as well as he knew the streets of his native town, and he saw at once the mistake Jim had made.

"Look out, Jim!" he shouted, standing up in the cockpit and waving his hand. "Port your helm! Port your helm or you will be on the rocks!"

"Oh, bags!" bawled Jim. "You can't come that on me, Joe Harriman. Don't you suppose I know the lake? Mind your own business!"

The words were no more than uttered when the White Cross struck the ledges with all the force of a full head of steam.

"There! The fool has done it now!" cried Joe, as the steamer careened away over to starboard. "If she has run her nose between the ledges Jim won't get her off in a week."

CHAPTER VII.

PILOT JOE TO THE RESCUE.

The White Cross was now in a bad box.

She had run her nose between two of the rocks which went to make up the sunken ledge, and there she lay stuck fast with no apparent chance of getting her off.

Jim Merton was beginning to understand that it was one thing to hold a captain's certificate, procured through the influence of a rich father, and another to know how to run a passenger steamer on Crooked Lake.

"By Jove, the 'Little Admiral' has got himself into a hole!" cried Bob Sanders. "Serves him well right! Confound his impudence. Ha! Ha! Ha! That's what I like to see! A snob like Jim Merton taken down."

Bob Sanders laughed as though it was all a good joke, and while he was laughing, the ladies on board the White Cross were screaming in terror while the men were getting down the life preservers, and the half dozen Eastlake boys whom Jim had engaged as "crew" were looking to the boats.

But Joe Harriman was not narrow-minded enough to look upon the discomfiture of his enemy as altogether a joke.

"You ought not to laugh, Bob," he exclaimed. "There may be some lives lost here before they get through with it all. We'll hang around for a minute and see if we can be of any help."

"I'm blamed if I would, then," said Bob. "I wouldn't raise my finger to help Jim Merton nor his father either—no!"

Joe made no further talk. Bob Sanders' morals were not in his keeping, and he did not propose to get into an argument, but as he did propose to have his own way, he ran down the sail, and, throwing out a pair of oars, held the Kitty in such a position that he could watch the maneuvers of the people on board the White Cross.

Jim had lost his head, evidently. He rang the bell to back, and when he couldn't back he rang to go ahead, and when he found he could not do that he commenced howling at the fellow who had acted as lookout, charging him with the blame of it all, for not giving him warning about the sunken ledge.

Meanwhile old Admiral Merton was displaying his sea training and showing that he knew what he was about even if his son did not.

His first care was to quiet the ladies, by assuring them that there was no danger, after which he popped down into the engine room and told the engineer to pay no attention to the bells until further orders, and after that he went up to the pilot-house with a cigar in his mouth and very calmly asked Jim what the matter was.

All this Joe learned later. He saw something of the admiral's movements as he lay there in the Kitty, and at last, just as he expected—and there is no denying that Joe took a good deal of pride in having his expectations realized—the admiral came to the rail and sung out:

"Ahoy there on board the sailboat! Ahoy!"

"Aye-aye, sir!" Joe promptly responded.

"Joe Harriman, what about these rocks? Do you know them at all?"

"As well as I know the stones in my own yard!" sung out Joe.

"Ahem! Well, that's a strong claim. I want you to help us float this steamer, my boy. -What's it worth?"

"Whatever you say, sir," replied Joe. "I happen to be working to-day, but I can spare a few moments to help Jim out if you wish."

"I don't need any help!" cried Jim proudly. "I can get the boat off if I am only let alone."

Admiral Merton raised his hand imperiously. "Twenty-five dollars for the job, Joe!" he called out.

"All right, sir!"

"You can get her off?"

"I can try."

"That's all any one can do. Run aboard here. We are green at the lake, and we have got to take a pilot, that's all."

"Excuse me, admiral," called Joe. "I'll come aboard presently. I've something else to do first."

"Something else to do!" roared the admiral. "Thunder and guns, boy! What are we to do in the meantime? Stick here on the ledge?"

"I was just going to explain, sir," replied Joe. "I'm going down to see how she lies; after that I'll know just what to do."

"Oh! Ah, yes! Just so! Good idea!" responded the admiral, looking rather foolish. "Well, be as quick as you can. I don't relish being grounded here."

"Twenty-five dollars! Oh, gee!" whispered Bob Sanders. "Joe, you were right, and I was wrong. It does pay better to keep on the blind side of those Mertons after all."

"It always pays to be obliging," replied Joe, and he proceeded to slip off his trousers and pull on an old pair under cover of the sail, which Bob raised a little for the purpose. Then stripping himself to the waist he took a header into the lake, and Bob, staring down into the clear water, could see him working his way among the sunken rocks.

Twice he came to the surface and went down again.

The people on board the White Cross watched him anxiously. The third time he came up, Joe went aboard the Kitty, and Admiral Merton, with more politeness than might have been expected, allowed him to dress before he said a word.

"Ready to come board, sir!" called Joe, saluting, after he had resumed his clothes.

"All right! Come ahead!" replied the admiral, and in a few moments Joe stood beside him on the deck.

Jim scowled at him out of the pilot house window, but he knew his father's temper too well to offer any objections to Joe's presence on the White Cross.

"Well, boy, can you get her off?" asked the admiral.

"Easily enough, sir," replied Joe.

"Do it, then. Jim, we have taken a pilot. The captain's place is now forward on deck."

Jim scowled out of the pilot house looking very glum, but he did not say a word.

Meanwhile, Admiral Merton had sent one of the crew into the engine room to reverse his order about the bells.

"The White Cross is in your hands, Mr. Pilot," he said. "Pull in and do your work."

"Let everybody get to the starboard side," said Joe. "Let the passengers run the bullet boxes all over there, too."

"Give your orders to the captain," said the admiral.

Joe shouted out his order, and Jim repeated it so loudly that the admiral himself heard it, and meanwhile, and getting the passengers into position.

Then they got down to business. He had discovered the position of the steamer without difficulty. He knew that hav-

ing loosened her hold on one of the rocks on the starboard side he could run her ahead about two feet, and then by swinging her stern, clear the ledge and have three and a half feet to spare before she struck the next rock beyond.

Then all that was needed was a quick backing, to get her off the starboard rocks altogether, and this done, nothing remained but to keep on backing until they were entirely off the sunken reef.

Before making a move, Joe called down the pipe and explained to the engineer just what he meant to do.

Next he gave the starting bell, and the instant the steamer began to move, he gave the bell to reverse.

"There!" exclaimed Jim. "I told you so! He doesn't know what he is about!"

Never was a boy called upon to eat his own words any quicker than was Jim Merton then, for the White Cross glided back into deep water as gracefully as possible, and once she was clear, in obedience to Joe's bell to go ahead, shot past the ledges and was afloat once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW BOAT AND BOWLERSVILLE.

"All clear, sir!" cried Joe, waving his hand at Jim Merton, as cheer after cheer went up from the passengers on board the White Cross.

"You had better run her to Bowlersville now you have begun," retorted Jim, sulkily. "I'm not going into the pilot-house again."

"Can't do it," replied Joe, ringing the bell to stop. "I've done my job. I'm going back on board the Kitty right now."

Without saying a word, Admiral Merton, with a look on his face which showed that he meant business, started along the deck toward his son.

Jim saw what was in the wind, and subsided immediately, going straight to the pilot-house, where Joe turned over the wheel.

"I suppose you think you have done a big thing," he growled.

"I got the steamer off the rocks, anyhow, Jim," replied Joe, pleasantly enough. "You want to keep well out into the lake when you are passing those ledges. It's a bad spot."

"Oh, hang your advice! Keep it until it is asked for," retorted Captain Jim. "I could have done what you did if I had only been given a little time."

Jim said no more, for the admiral came up just then.

"Here's your money, Joe," he said, handing over \$25. "Did I understand you to say that you were not working at the present time?"

"Not regularly, sir. I'm much obliged for this."

"You are welcome. You have honestly earned it. How would you like to come and work for me?"

"In what capacity, sir?"

"Oh, as a general helper on board this steamer. I'd make it pay you pilot wages, all right."

"Couldn't do it, sir. I could never get along with Jim."

"Yes, you could. I'll fix that. Think it over, my boy. I'm much obliged to you for what you have done."

"That's nothing but taffy," declared Bob, after Joe got back on board the Kitty. "He doesn't want you. He wouldn't take you if he could. Admiral Merton would make it so hot for you that you wouldn't stay there a week."

While he did not agree with Bob as to the first proposition, he entirely agreed with him as to the second.

He felt it would be pretty useless to attempt to "hitch

horses" with the little tramp of Mustang, so he never gave the matter a second thought.

Meanwhile, the Kitty sped down the lake for Bowlersville. For a long time the White Cross remained in view, and they could hear the music, but at last the sweet strains of the Est-lake Brass Band ceased to be heard, and the steamer passed out of sight.

The boys met her again, however, before they reached Bowlersville, coming back up the lake.

It was a perfect ovation for Joe.

The band began to play "Hail to the Chief," as soon as the leader caught sight of the Kitty, and when the steamer passed them, the passengers all crowded to the rail and cheer after cheer rang out.

Joe and Bob waved their hats in return, but Captain Jim never even looked in their direction, but stood like an image at the wheel, keeping his eyes fixed up the lake.

"He's still sulky," said Bob.

"So it seems," laughed Joe, "but I guess he will get over it all right. I know Jim Merton pretty well. He likes to show his authority, but he don't stay mad very long."

About half-past one the Kitty pulled up at Bowlersville wharf, and Joe, having made fast the boat, the boys went straight along the shore to Mr. Beasley's.

"Wonder what boat that can be," remarked Bob, as they neared the gate of the boat-builder's yard.

Joe made no answer. He did not know what to say, so he said nothing, but his curiosity was fully aroused by the sight of a small steamer about the size of the White Cross on the stocks.

She was evidently an old boat being thoroughly overhauled, and the work appeared to be rapidly approaching completion. There were a great many men moving about her deck, and the sound of the caulkers' hammers, working on her hull, grew louder and louder as the two boys neared Mr. Beasley's gate.

"Bet you a dollar that's a boat fixed up for Colonel Millington," said Bob. "I knew blamed well the colonel wouldn't give up to the admiral; he's not that kind. And if he don't intend to make you captain of her, I'll eat my head."

"Shut up, Bob," said Joe. "What's the use of raising a fellow's hopes for nothing? That boat may not belong to Colonel Millington at all. It looks to me like the old Panther being overhauled."

"Well, the Panther was a good boat, wasn't she?"

"That's what she was. I wouldn't ask for a better sailer, but her cabins were just nothing but dark, dirty holes, and entirely too small. If ever there was a badly arranged boat it was the Panther, but we shall soon know all about it, for there we are."

They had now reached the gate. Finding it unfastened, Joe opened it and walked in, running right into the arms of Mr. Beasley, who, in company with another gentleman, was in the act of leaving the yard.

"Hello, my boy, how's it going?" asked the boat-builder. "Well at it, I think. Still waiting those Est-lake fellows and hoping that you have your business over with them."

"Who was telling you that, sir?" asked Joe, modestly.

"The captain of the White Cross at Port Judd," said the boat-builder. "He's a little right on the bridge. What's your business, young man?"

"I'm here to see your friend Colonel Millington, sir," replied Joe. "He was supposed to go to see him this morning, so he sent me down to the lake in the Kitty. How is he?"

Mr. Beasley took up the matter and said about as follows:

"Hello, my boy! This will be a good day for the captain of the Red Cross. You wait his name about a dozen things, I

don't doubt, as I'm off for New York, considering the time. Whatever Joe Harriman says goes.

"Yours,"

"J. MILLINGTON."

"That's business!" cried Beasley. "Well, boy, what have you to suggest?"

"I—I don't understand!" stammered Joe, hot all over. "The Red Cross—I——"

"Of course you don't know her," broke in Beasley. "but there she is. Formerly the Panther, now the Red Cross. Captain Joe Harriman, master. Go aboard and look her over, young man, and be ready with your suggestions when I get back from lunch. Mind, now, you don't make too many, for I'm under contract to have the Red Cross afloat on Crooked Lake inside of two weeks."

CHAPTER IX.

WHITE CROSS VERSUS RED CROSS.

Thus saying, Mr. Beasley passed right out of the gate, followed by the Port Judd gentleman, who was a stranger to Joe, although he remembered seeing him on the Traveler once or twice.

"Hooray!" cried Bob, tossing up his hat. "What did I tell you? Don't I know Colonel Millington better than you do? Three cheers for the captain of the Red Cross!"

"Shut up, Bob," said Joe. "By gracious, this is too good to be true. I'm no captain, though, and I won't take out a captain's license the way Jim Merton did. I'd be ashamed to even apply for it until I've passed my examination, which I can't do till I'm twenty-one."

"How about Jim?"

"Oh, you will find that it is really the admiral himself who holds the license, but that's none of our business. Come on! I don't deny that I'm wild to see what they are doing with the Panther. It was the fastest boat on Geneva Lake. I've heard say, and we'll make her do her duty on Crooked Lake, you bet."

So the boys went aboard and were utterly amazed at the money Colonel Millington was evidently laying out.

The cabins had been enlarged, and the waste-room amidship all utilized.

Neat little staterooms were being fitted up, and the dining-hall was being trimmed with hard wood.

Besides this a new boiler was going in, and the engine was being thoroughly overhauled.

So interested in it all did Joe become that an hour passed like a minute, and the next he knew Mr. Beasley was back again ready to talk business.

Joe had some suggestions to give, and he offered them in such a frank, manly way that Mr. Beasley could not possibly take offense.

"It's all right, my boy," he said. "Whatever you say goes; those are the orders, and they shall be carried out. Tell Colonel Millington that everything is proceeding nicely, and that unless something very unexpected happens the Red Cross will be at Westlake wharf on time."

And so it was.

Exactly two weeks from that day the Red Cross, shining with fresh paint and with flags flying, came steaming up to Westlake wharf with Pilot Joe at the wheel.

A big crowd was on the wharf to meet her. The Est-lake Brass Band, the bitter rival of the Westlake band, was there ready to blow and thump for her, and worth.

Every one who owned a flag hung it out and kept it out till next day, which was to be the greatest day in Westlake's history, the day on which the Red Cross was to make her first trip.

"Well, mother, what do you think of it all now?" asked Joe, as he was about to leave the house next morning to go on board the steamer.

"Here I am engaged at \$75 per month salary, and everything found, and with the prospect of being a captain as soon as I am twenty-one. Wasn't it worth waiting for, after all?"

Of course it was. Mrs. Harriman, confirmed grumbler though she was, could not deny it. She looked admiringly at her son in his new suit of clothes, and replied, in the same old fretful way: "Well, Joe, it is no more than you deserved."

Perhaps Joe thought so, too, but he did not say it, and he hurried to the wharf, to find it already crowded and quite a number of passengers aboard.

Joe immediately took charge of the Red Cross.

Although Captain Tupper was still nominally in charge of the Westlake and Bowlersville line, it was understood that he should not in any way interfere with Pilot Joe.

As a matter of form the captain was on board now, but when the start was made Joe stood at the wheel.

Oh, what a cheering there was, what a waving of hats and handkerchiefs! How sweetly the music sounded across the lake!

The band was on the afterdeck now, and the pretty little steamer was crowded with passengers bound down the lake and back again just for the trip.

"This boat don't stop at Eastlake!" roared Colonel Millington, as they sailed away from the wharf.

There was more cheering, and the cheers broke out again when, as they rounded Wessel Island, they saw the White Cross just rounding the point.

"There she comes, Joe," said Bob, who happened to be passing the pilot-house at that moment. "Don't you let Captain Jim cut you off."

Joe was mate of the Red Cross, of course, and his suggestion was by no means made without good cause, for the way the White Cross was holding her course it was quite evident that Captain Jim meant to cut Pilot Joe off, and make it necessary for him to pass perilously close to the sunken ledges if he desired to hold the lead.

"What's that fellow heading for, Joe?" demanded Colonel Millington a little later.

He was just the same still, and came hurrying up to the pilot-house in a great rage.

"That's his business, not mine," replied Joe, coolly.

"By Joe! I don't know about that! I don't care to have my boat cut off on the first trip, and that is just what that Captain Jim means to do."

"He will have to know the lake a little better than he does now, before he cuts me off," said Joe. "If he don't look out for himself he's just about the same trap that he is trying to set for me."

"All right, you're the boss," said Colonel Millington, who was sensible enough not to interfere.

He was very merry and, though, and so was Captain Tupper, who came hurrying up to the pilot-house a few moments later on.

In this race the White Cross had shown her intentions too plainly to be misunderstood.

Captain Jim was heading her directly across his rival's path.

"Look him the vessel, Joe," said the old captain: "he will crowd you on the ledges, sure, if you don't."

"Just what I'm going to do," replied Joe, and he sounded his whistle to let Captain Jim understand that he meant to hold his course.

The little magnate of Eastlake paid not the slightest heed. By rights he should have answered the whistle and stopped, but instead he kept straight on.

To the passengers all this carried with it no intimation of danger, but Captain Tupper and Joe knew just where the danger lay.

"Don't try it, Joe! Don't try it!" cried the captain, for Joe also kept straight on. "You will either run on the ledges or have a collision, sure!"

"Don't you let him cut you off, Joe Harriman!" shouted Colonel Millington from the deck at the same time.

Here were contrary orders.

To obey the captain's, Joe had to turn his wheel one way; to obey the owner, it would be necessary to twist it the other.

But Pilot Joe paid no heed to either.

Once more he blew his whistle, and then again—and without replying either to the captain or the colonel kept steadily on his course.

CHAPTER X.

JOE COMES OUT AHEAD AGAIN.

"By the eternal, Jim Merton, if you let Joe Harriman cut you off it's the last time you will ever run the White Cross! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, boy, and don't you forget that I mean every word I say!"

Admiral Merton was mad when he came storming into the pilot-house, and the admiral was known to his wife and son as a domestic tyrant of the worst kind.

At other times he was foolishly indulgent to Jim and loaded him with money and foolish praise.

In many respects Jim was just like his father. He was vain, thickheaded, tyrannical, but kindhearted, and would go to any length to oblige a friend, his worst feature being a sulky disposition. If things went to suit him, Jim Merton was all energy and would work like a horse, but if he was "called down" by his father, his usual course was to promptly throw up the sponge.

Jim was sulky now. He and his father had been in two rows already that morning, and here was a third one about to begin.

"I don't know what you come in here for bothering me, governor," retorted Jim. "I'm doing my best. He's got the right of way, and I'm stealing it from him—what more would you have me do?"

"Hang the right of way! You keep straight ahead."

"That's what I'm doing. It will throw their boat on the ledge, though."

"Let it. Serves Joe Harriman right. The impudent beggar! He refused my offer to come and work for us. He knew all the time that Jim Millington was building a boat to run opposition to us."

"If he had accepted your offer, I should have resigned," replied Jim, sulkily.

"No, you wouldn't."

"Yes, I would!"

"How dare you speak to me so, James? You will do just as I tell you until you are of age."

"Never mind that, pop. There goes his whistle again. If I run a dozen yards further he will have to take to the rocks and you will have another suit for damages on your hands."

"Say another word," roared the admiral, "and I'll take the wheel away from you and disgrace you before every passenger on board, by taking charge myself."

"Settled," growled Jim, setting his teeth. "I don't care what happens now!"

So he held his course and blew no whistle, but the result was not at all what he fully expected it would be.

Joe ran the Red Cross so close to the rival steamer that they almost touched.

"Steer off there! Steer off, confound you!" roared Colonel Millington.

"Go to blazes with your old second-hand ark!" bawled the admiral. Then to his son he added:

"Ram him, Jimmy! Ram him! Punch a hole in his side!"

Perhaps Captain Jim might have done it out of sheer desperation if he had been given the chance.

But he was not. Pilot Joe had no idea whatever of letting himself be rammed.

He knew exactly what he was about, and with Captain Tupper roaring at him on one side and Colonel Millington bawling at him on the other, Joe heeded neither, but followed his own head, and twisting his wheel steered straight for the sunken ledges.

"You are mad!" cried Captain Tupper. "Give me that wheel, boy! You will knock a hole in the bottom of the Red Cross on her trial trip."

"Tupper, hold your horses. Let the boy alone!" shouted Colonel Millington. Then he turned his back on the pilot-house, walked forward and never said another word.

Now in doing this Colonel Millington showed his good sense.

He saw that it was too late to interfere now, and that being the case he instantly determined to let Pilot Joe take his own lead, and the result showed the wisdom of his course.

"Don't interfere with me, cap," said Joe, fiercely. "I know what I am about."

And so he did. Joe knew every rock of the sunken ledge, and by skillful management of his wheel he took the Red Cross safely over that danger spot and stood straight down the lake a good eighth mile ahead of the White Cross, going around the ledges through the ignorance of Captain Jim.

And the distance was not regained by the White Cross.

The old Panther was decidedly the faster boat of the two, and she had lost none of her good sailing qualities through the change of name.

With band playing and flags flying, the Red Cross landed her passengers at Bowlersville wharf a good twenty minutes ahead of her rival, and was received with the deafening cheers of a large crowd.

"Joe, I beg your pardon. Your knowledge of the lake beats mine all hollow," was what Captain Tupper said, when the wisdom of Pilot Joe's course was shown.

"Joe," said Colonel Millington, shaking the young pilot by the hand when he came down on deck at Bowlersville, "don't you ever let anybody interfere with you again as long as you run my steamer. I don't care who it is. As for myself, I shall never say another word."

"That's all right, sir," replied Joe. "I know what I am about. There can't be but one boss in a case like that."

Once or twice during the month which followed, Captain Jim did manage to get into Bowlersville ahead of the Red Cross, but there was always a reason for it and it soon began to be understood that the Red Cross was always on time and the White Cross always late, until at last the railroad company issued an order that the trains would no longer be held for the slower steamer, but would start immediately upon the arrival of the Westlake boat.

It was a bitter blow to Admiral Merton. It made no difference that Captain Jim was his own son, there was the fact ever staring him in the face that people would not patronize the Eastlake line.

Almost no passengers were taken on at Port Judd, Dillsburg and other landings by the White Cross, while even from Eastlake itself people often rowed across the lake to Westlake in order to save time and make the run with Pilot Joe.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN JIM GOES A-FISHING.

"There's no use talking, Jim, we have either got to dispose of Joe Harriman, or go out of the steamboat business," remarked Admiral Merton as he sat talking with the young captain of the White Cross one evening on the broad veranda of the admiral's handsome mansion at Eastlake.

"Well, that's about the size of it, father. I hate to play second fiddle to any one, or to own myself beaten, but one has got to acknowledge the truth."

Now Admiral Merton and his son were not perpetually quarreling, of course; this was one of the times when they were able to sit down quietly and talk business, it seemed.

"We have either got to hire him, or get him out of the way," said the admiral, speaking of Joe.

"Heavens! you don't mean to hire some one to murder Joe, do you?" asked Captain Jim, with a short laugh.

"Don't be absurd, James," retorted the admiral; "of course I am no murderer."

"Nobody said you was, pop, but when you talk about getting Joe out of the way what's a fellow to think. Say, I want to see the line go, and much as I hate to knuckle under, I'm willing to let Joe do the pilot act on the White Cross."

"I wish you wouldn't talk slang, James. Joe will not do the 'pilot act,' as you call it. He simply can't be hired, that's all."

"You failed once, I know, but why not try it again?"

"Jim, I have tried it twice again and it's no go."

"Hello, you didn't tell me that?"

"I don't tell all I know, but there is one thing certain, the Eastlake line is running down rapidly. We get almost no passengers from the way ports, and even the freight is beginning to fall off lately. Of course, we can't run the line for the Eastlake trade alone."

"Suppose we change our time and start earlier?"

"Then the Eastlake people will kick, and they are kicking hard enough now."

"I'll tell you another scheme that I was thinking of, suppose——"

"Hold on, Jim, there comes Sheriff Bergman. I have to see him on business. We will talk about this later on."

Jim got up angrily.

"It's always the way!" he exclaimed. "I never can get a chance to talk to you. Well, I'm going a-fishing for eels. Don't know when I'll be back."

"Don't you stay out too long," said the admiral, warningly. "You were out half the night eeling last week."

To this Jim made no reply, but secretly resolved that he would stay out as long as he pleased, and leaving his father to talk to the sheriff, who was a Bowlersville man, and had come up on the White Cross that afternoon, he strolled down to the shore where he kept several boats, all of which were as fine as money could buy.

Upon reaching the landing, Jim went aboard a neat little skiff which he always used on these excursions, and pulled out to Weasel Island, enjoying the exercise immensely, for he was a strong, muscular fellow, and liked nothing better than to test his strength to its utmost capacity.

Upon reaching the Turkey's Neck, Jim ran his boat through that narrow channel and pulled up alongside of the wreck of the Traveller, which still lay stranded on the rocks.

Making the boat fast, he went aboard, and going into the cabin's stateroom got out a lot of dry wood which he had hidden there a few nights before.

With this he went out on the "flat rock" against which the steamer was now firmly lodged, and built a big fire. This

brought the eels around, and Jim spent two hours spearing them and made a large catch.

It was midnight when he let the fire die down and began to think of returning.

His basket was full of eels, and his trip had been an entire success, but when he went forward on the main deck and started to get aboard the skiff, to his disgust he found that it had vanished and there was nothing but the rope left behind.

"Confound it all! What was the matter with me that I couldn't tie a decent knot!" exclaimed Jim. "What in thunder am I to do now?"

He looked about in dismay. As a matter of fact there was nothing to do, unless he wanted to swim for it.

The rocks were twenty feet away from the swampy shores of Weasel Island, while to cross to the mainland was fully a quarter of a mile, and Jim, unfortunately, had never learned to swim.

"I'm stuck," he muttered, disgustedly. "That's all there is about it, I'm stuck, I've got to stay here till somebody comes and takes me off."

For half an hour Captain Jim stormed around the deck of the Traveler, berating his ill luck, which he would have done better if he had termed his carelessness, and then giving it up went into the cabin and threw himself down upon an old horse-hair sofa which had not been considered worth removing, and at last fell asleep.

Now Jim was a pretty good sleeper, even if he did not understand navigation very well, and he might have put it through till morning if he had not been disturbed at a little after one o'clock by being suddenly jerked to his feet and violently shaken.

A big clumsy fellow with a dark, sinister face had him in his grasp, while a second man—an equally tough-looking character—stood near flashing a dark lantern in his face.

"Wake up, you boy! Wake up!" growled the man, giving Jim another shake. "Who in thunder are you and what brought you here?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE GHOST OF WEASEL ISLAND.

"Let go of me," cried Jim, shaking himself free. "I guess I've got as much right on board this steamer as you have. What do you want?"

"That's right, Chris," said the man with the lantern; "there's no use shaking the liver out of the boy. Let him explain."

Jim told the story of the eels and the missing boat.

— He would have liked it much better if he could have afforded to be ugly and keep back all information, but he did not dare to attempt to show his authority now.

"So you are stuck here, are you?" asked Chris. "Say, Dolby, what do you think of it? Look at his size. He must be about the fellow we want."

"I should say he was," growled the man with the lantern. "It's damn sure that neither you nor I will do."

"That's what. Have we got time for it, though? It's pretty late. We have the main job on land yet."

"Right you are, but this is a sure thing, and the other is an uncertainty. I say a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush every time."

"How long will it take?"

"Not over half an hour."

"All right, it's a go. We'll fetch the boy along."

"But I don't want to go with you fellows, and I won't," said Jim, determined. "You just go about your business and leave me alone."

The two men burst out laughing.

"Who the mischief are you to put on such high and mighty airs?" exclaimed Chris.

"I'm Admiral Merton's son. I'm Captain of the White Cross!" retorted Jim, drawing himself up proudly. "My father will make it hot for you if you interfere with me."

Chris laughed until his sides fairly shook.

"Well, Mr. Admiral Merton's son, and Captain of the White Cross, we are sorry to trouble such a high and mighty potentate as you seem to be," he said. "But all the same we have a little job for you to do and you will have to go along with us, so some on."

Jim started to make more talk, but the man, Dolby, soon cut him short by drawing off and giving him a violent slap across the face.

"Ah, bite it off," he cried. "Don't give us any more of your lip. Into the boat with him, Chris. We haven't got more than a week to spend chinning here."

This settled Jim's fate. He was hustled into a boat which lay alongside the Traveler in short order.

Very likely he would have resisted still further, but Chris drew a revolver and flourished it in his face, threatening to shoot him if he opened his mouth again.

Dolby then threw out the oars and pulled directly over to Weasel Island, where they landed in a little cove.

"Now, then, boy, do you know this place?" asked Chris. "Speak up, or I'll give you a lead pill to swallow. We have no time to spend fooling here."

"It's W—weasel Island," stammered Jim.

"It's W—weasel Island," repeated Chris, mimicking him. "Don't you suppose we know that? Do you know where the old tannery is? Say?"

"It's back in the swamp."

"Ever been there?"

"Yes."

"Well, what's the road? That's where we are going now."

"You follow this path," replied Jim. "It's only a little way. Why can't you find it for yourself and let me go?"

"Why, because we don't want to," growled the man. "Pike ahead now. You can take the lantern, and, remember, if you drop it or try to bolt, that these lead pills are all ready for you."

Jim was terribly frightened—there is no denying it.

He walked along the narrow path which ran between the tall elder bushes, expecting every moment to hear the crack of the revolver, and feel the bullet in his back.

But Jim was afraid of something else—we are almost ashamed to tell it of so sensible a young man.

It was ghosts!

Don't laugh, but Jim was superstitious and his heart beat wildly as he remembered the stories he had heard about the old tannery on Weasel Island.

It was years and years since the ruinous old structure had been occupied.

Long before Jim was born, the business went to pieces, and the owner of the tannery had been murdered by his partner who, it is said, ran off with a large sum of money.

Since then the plant had fallen into decay, the wharf on the other side of the island had rotted, and been washed away, the tannery had partially tumbled down and the elder bushes had grown up in the swamp almost hiding it from view. It had become the resort of bats and owls and—of the stories of the old timers around Eastlake and Westlake were to be believed—of ghosts as well.

Strange lights were seen floating at the windows at midnight and unearthly sounds had been heard by the few ven-

two men, who came to the island to board the ghost in its lair.

Jim to a certain extent believed all this, and his hair began to rise when they suddenly came out of the swamp and saw the rippers all about them rising before them, but Chris and Dolby were evidently disturbed by no such fears.

"That's the place they are in!" exclaimed Chris. "Say, Dolby, we are going to get them diamonds. I feel it in my bones."

"I feel the rheumatism in my bones along with that infernal swamp," growled Dolby. "Never mind, though. We will soon finish up here, and be off to the other place. Give me that lantern, boy—and go on."

"I—I don't want to go in there!" stammered Jim.

"You've gotter," replied Chris giving him a kick, which caused Jim to jump through the low door after Dolby, who was already inside and flashing the lantern around.

"Now then, boy," he said, "there's a small hole here about your size, somewhere, and you have got to get into it, so prepare yourself. Perhaps you will find a small grip-stick in there, and if you do, why take it out."

"I won't go!" declared Jim. "I say I won't!"

"And I say you will," cried Dolby fiercely, and he was going to use force when all at once an awful yell rang out through the dimly lighted room.

"What in thunder is that?" gasped Dolby.

The door was then to answer, a light shot up between two of the rafters which supported the floor above, and a strange figure was seen advancing toward them.

"The old hag himself!" yelled Chris, seizing Dolby's arm, while Jim took a dismal stare.

Chris would not be excused for thinking so, for the figure was not much more than a human being except that it walked upright on two legs.

It had a well developed pair of horns on its head and a long tail dangling down behind!

CHAPTER XIII

LIVELY WORK IN WESTLAKE.

Captain Jim Martin was no fool, arbitrary little tyrant as he was at times.

A stout, well built man and tall was a little too absurd to be taken as even in the haunted territory on Westlake Island, and the chances are that had Jim been alone he would have walked boldly up to the terrible spot and asked him who he was and what he was doing there.

But he was not alone. Chris gave one wild yell and ran out of the territory as fast as his legs could carry him. Dolby stopped only to grab Jim by the arm and then ran out too.

"What, boy! Stay for your life!" he yelled. "To fury with the diamonds; I wouldn't go back there again for a bushel of them; no, I wouldn't!"

Jim was almost swept off his feet.

Chris was running back through the swamp and Dolby hurried him after him. There was no let up until they came back on shore of the old Traveler's wharf, when they came to a standstill on the shore, all out of breath.

"What's the matter with you? What did you run away for?" demanded Dolby then.

"Didn't see any better than you," growled Chris. "Oh, I'm not dead, I heard what you said. You can go back if you want to, but I'll be gone if I do."

"We'll take it in by daylight next time," muttered Dolby.

Then turning fiercely on Jim, he cried out:

"What are you grinning about, Bum? I s'pose you think we are a couple of softies? Spit it out! Isn't that so?"

"I'm not saying anything," said Jim. "This isn't my business."

"No, but you are laughing."

"Is there any law against a fellow laughing?"

"Blast you! I believe you know more about this business than you let on. What was that thing we saw?"

"Oh, don't ask me," replied Jim. "Your eyes are just as good as mine. I don't know anything about that place, except that folks say it's haunted. Maybe we saw the ghost."

"Is that right? Do they say it's haunted?" demanded Chris.

"That's what they do."

"Did you ever see the ghost before?"

"No. I was never there in the night—I was never there but once or twice anyhow. I don't know any more about the place than you do. I suppose you will let me go now?"

"You will stay just where you are, or get a taste of this!" and Chris, drawing his revolver and covering Jim. "Come here, Dolby," he called. "I want to say a word to you."

Dolby obeyed, and the word was spoken in a whisper.

"You think we had better take him?" was all Jim caught, and the next he knew, Dolby sprang suddenly upon him and held him tight, after which they tied his hands and dropped him into a rowboat which lay almost by the Traveler's.

The two men got in themselves, then, and pulled off toward Westlake with Captain Jim a prisoner in the stern.

It was now between twelve and one o'clock, and while Captain Jim was being pulled across the lake by these two suspicious characters, Pilot Joe was sound asleep in the captain's stateroom, on board the Red Cross, which was lying at Westlake wharf.

Joe's mother was away in Utica visiting relatives, and the regular watchman on the Red Cross had proved himself nothing but a "bum," so Joe bounced him that evening, and with Bob Sanders, as a relief, undertook to watch himself until another man could be engaged.

Bob had slept until midnight, and now Joe was taking his turn, but he was not destined to get his full share of sleep, for between two and three o'clock Bob came bouncing into the stateroom, calling out:

"Get up, Joe! Get up! There's another explosion up in town!"

Joe got out of the bunk in a hurry.

"What in thunder are you talking about, Bob?" he asked, sleepily. "I didn't hear a thing."

"How could you hear when you were asleep. It's an explosion updown—that's all."

"A steam! It can't be old man Styles' again."

"Don't know. I'd like mighty well to go up and find out, though. It made a thundering loud noise."

Joe was not undressed, he pulled on his coat and shoes, he was ready for business and hurriedly joined Bob at work.

"Hark!" said Bob, "there's some one yelling!"

"Thieves! Thieves! Murder!" came the cry ringing out upon the stillness of the night.

"I'm going, Bob," cried Joe.

"So am I. The steamer can't take any harm for a few moments—think so, Joe?"

"No! Come along!"

It was too much for the boys. Perhaps they ought to have stuck to their post, but they didn't.

Dropping over the side, they sprinted up Bay street toward Main.

They had not gone far before they saw five men running down from Main street.

Two were without hats, and Joe saw that the one who was between them was a English-looking fellow; the electric light in front of Dewar's carriage factory was upon them a moment later and then Joe gasped out: "It's Captain Jim!"

"Blamed if it isn't!" gasped Bob. "What in thunder can it all mean?"

At the same instant several men came dashing around the corner of Main street in hot pursuit.

The men looked back, and saw them coming. Instantly they separated, two tumbling over the fence into the yard of the carriage factory while the other three—the two bare-headed men and the boy—came dashing on.

"It's Jim, sure! Those two fellows are holding on to him!" exclaimed Joe. "Look, Bob! It's the watch that's following them. That's Officer Weeks."

"That's who it is," said Bob. "Jim's in trouble again. What is the little snoozer been doing now, I wonder? Now, he is trying to pull away, and those fellows want to hit him. One of them has got a bag! There, Weeks is going to shoot!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Mr. Weeks, one of the three policemen in Westlake, discharged his revolver three times.

One of the bareheaded men gave a sharp cry, and began to limp, but Captain Jim half pitched forward, and just as the three came opposite to where Bob and Joe stood, he stumbled and fell to the ground.

"Get up, blame you," cried the man on the left, jerking Jim to his feet. "We don't leave you behind to tell tales on us! Get up, or I'll drive a knife into your heart!"

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN JIM AND THE BURGLARS.

Pilot Joe and his friend Bob Harriman had chosen their position well, if they wanted to avoid being mixed up in this exciting affair.

They had stopped alongside of Dewar's lumber yard, where there were great piles of boards, building material and even with the sidewalk, and not caring to mark a share of themselves, Joe and Bob stood just within the shadow of the piles.

Here of course they could not only see all that was going on, but also hear everything, and the threat made against Jim Marton came straight to Joe's ears.

Then was the time that Joe Harriman showed how little villain even he felt toward his former fellow and present rival on Crooked Lake.

He started out like a flash, and planted himself in the path of the three fugitives.

"Joe! Joe! Save me!" cried Jim.

"Catch him, Chris!" said the man who was Harriman.

The other dropped his hold on Jim's arm and came at Joe with a knife.

An exciting moment followed.

Joe held the knife and gave Chris a sting between the eyes, while Bob jumped in and gave him another alongside the head.

"Drop it and save yourself!" cried Bob, who was the man on the other side of Jim.

But Joe gave him one too, and at the same time dragged Jim away from him.

The next they knew Chris and Bob were tearing down

Bay street, closely pursued by Officer Weeks, and several others, while Joe and Bob hurried Jim in among the lumber piles, having all they could do to keep him on his feet.

"Don't let them get me, Joe! Oh, don't let them get me!" pleaded Jim. "They've blown up the safe—they've robbed the bank. If I am arrested my father will never believe in my innocence, and I'm ruined for life!"

"They sha'n't get you, Jim," said Joe. "I don't believe Weeks saw us, anyhow; he and the rest are following those men."

"Oh, I can't go any further! I can't!" gasped Jim. "I'm shot! I'm dying! Oh, my leg hurts me!"

"Here, Bob, put him on my back! I can carry him," said Joe. "Put your arm around my neck, Jim, and hold on tight. That's the talk. Now we are off again. We'll get you on board the Red Cross, and no one shall be the wiser. How in the world did you ever manage to get yourself into this scrape?"

Now another would have told under these circumstances, but Jim Marton was a peculiarly reticent fellow at all times, and just now feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself to think that he had been captured by common burglars and made a tool of, he just held his tongue.

Joe did not urge him to speak. He knew Jim's proud nature, and understood the boy's silence better than one would have supposed.

Fortunately for Captain Jim he had fallen into the hands of one who knew every turn and corner around the wharves of Westlake.

Joe had no trouble in getting his old schoolmate on board the Red Cross, and snugly stowed away in the captain's stateroom, before Officer Weeks, Constable Coons, and several others came tearing down the wharf.

"They are coming!" called Bob, who was on the watch.

Joe had stripped off Jim's trousers, and by the light of the stateroom lamp was examining the bullet wound just below the boy's hip.

"Oh, you can't do anything, Joe. You can't do anything!" groaned Jim. "I wish here to have a doctor, and that will give me dead away."

"You can't get a doctor," said Joe. "The hall is right here in plain sight. I can see it. I believe I can get it out with the point of my knife."

"They are coming!" called Bob, again opening the door now, and looking in.

"If they find me here I'm lost," gasped Jim. "Say, Joe, will you help me? Upon my honor I am innocent. I'll tell you all about it some time. I got mixed up in a bad snap—that's all."

"Of course, I believe you, Jim," Joe replied. "You have had the big lead in this, and you haven't been very nice to me, but I never found you a liar, and I don't believe you are one now."

"Oh! Oh! That hurts! Gee, how it hurts!" yelled Jim. "Don't stop that knife into my leg again, Joe. I can't stand it—no I can't!"

"I don't have to," said Joe. "I pried it out with my knife. All over, old man. Just give me a couple of minutes to bluff those fellows, and I'll come back and wash the wound and bandage it up. There's nothing to be afraid of now."

"Joe, you are too good to me," groaned Jim. "Just wait till I get out of this snap—that's all. I'll show you that I haven't got a bad leg of the kind I had as you think."

But Pilot Joe did not wait to hear this. Hurrying out after Bob, he was just in time to face Officer Weeks and his friend Constable Coons as they came down the wharf.

"Hello! On board the Red Cross. Hello!" called the constable, as Joe and Bob advanced to the rail.

"Hello, Mr. Coons! That you?", called Joe. "What's the matter uptown?"

"The matter is that burglars have broken into the Westlake Bank and blown up the safe!" cried the constable.

"Great Scott! You don't say so! Did they get away with any of the cash?"

"Fifty thousand dollars—that's all! Did you see any men running this way?"

"Why, no, I didn't see anybody running this way!" replied Joe. "Bob heard the explosion, and I heard the shots, and the hollering, but the burglars didn't come this way, Mr. Coons."

"They've given us the slip, somehow," replied the constable. "I thought mebbe they cut through Bessinger's lumber yard and sneaked on board here."

"No, no!" replied Joe. "If they had we should have been sure to have seen them. You are on the wrong track, Mr. Coons."

"Told you so," put in Officer Weeks, and after a few further words the searching party hurried away up the wharf, and went on down the shore.

CHAPTER XV.

PILOT JOE GETS THE BOUNCE.

There was quite a crowd on board the Red Cross that morning when she started down the lake for the Annual Cattle Show was to be held at Bowlersville, and that meant heavy travel both up and down.

Captain Tupper was not on board—he seldom showed himself nowadays.

Neither was Colonel Millington, for he had been away for several days. Some said he had gone to Buffalo, but Joe had reason to believe that he had gone still further West.

Everybody was talking about the bank robbery, of course, but Bob, who mingled among the passengers, did not hear Jim Merton's name mentioned.

The general belief seemed to be that the burglars had come from New York.

As the steamer started out into the lake, Bob came to the window of the pilot-house, and told Joe that Captain Jim wanted to see him.

"Why, I can't go now very well, Bob," replied Joe. "What does he want?"

"Well, he wouldn't tell me," said Bob, "but I guess I can handle the wheel all right for a minute till you get back."

"Oh, I suppose you can. I'll go," answered Joe. "I think I know what he wants."

So Joe hurried to the captain's stateroom, where he found Jim up and dressed and sitting in a chair.

"Joe," he said, "you have done me a big service. Don't you want to know how I came to be with those men?"

"No, I don't," replied Joe promptly. "I don't want to know anything about it, for what I don't know I can't tell."

"But you ought to know. It is only right. Bob says there has been \$50,000 stolen. Of course, I'm coming out with the whole story, but I do want to tell my father first."

"That's right," said Joe, "and anyhow I haven't time to listen to the story now, for I must get back to the wheel. What was what you wanted to see me about, Jim?"

"No. I want to ask another favor of you, Joe. I want you to land me at Eastlake wharf. I'm pretty badly used up. I don't believe I'm able to drive up from Port Judd."

"It's a big task, Jim," replied Joe, slowly. "It's as much as my job is worth."

"I know it: but you needn't worry, father and I will look out for you."

"That promise won't do me much good, and anyhow I don't like the idea of trying to curry favor with rich men, but if you say you don't feel able to stand the ride from Port Judd, why, I've got to do it—that's all."

Pilot Joe was back at his wheel a moment later, and when the Red Cross came off Weasel Island, the passengers were all immensely surprised to see the pilot give his wheel a twist and swing the steamer around the island.

Were they going to make the landing at Eastlake? Had Colonel Millington and Admiral Merton made up their quarrel?

These were the questions that were in everybody's mouth.

As the Red Cross neared Eastlake, Joe saw the White Cross pull away from the wharf.

He seized the glass, and turning it upon the pilot-house, saw that Admiral Merton himself was at the wheel.

"That means more trouble for Jim, I expect," he thought. "Strange the admiral don't see us. Hello! He has caught sight of us now. Wonder what he thinks? By gracious, he is going to shoot the Turkey's Neck!"

The old admiral gave one look at the rival steamer, and then turned his attention to his business and never even looked round again.

Long before Joe could make Eastlake wharf, the White Cross had passed through the narrow channel and was standing off down the lake.

Naturally, the passengers were rather surprised when they saw Captain Jim go hobbling down the gangplank, and they were still further entertained when the master of the rival steamer turned and waved his hand to Pilot Joe, and Joe waved back to him.

In fact, some of the passengers kept talking about it all the way down the lake, and were still discussing the matter when the Red Cross touched Bowlersville wharf twenty minutes late, and not a few were highly indignant at the delay, which had been just sufficient to make them miss the West-bound train.

"You are in for it now, Joe," said Bob, as the pilot came down the deck. "There's Millington on the wharf, and there's blood in his eye, or I'm a ghost. Here he comes."

Joe was seriously disturbed. What in the world he was to say to Colonel Millington he did not know, and he looked rather confused when he met the irate magnate of Westlake on the stairs.

"How is this, Joe?" stormed the colonel. "What in thunder do you mean by stopping at Eastlake, contrary to my orders? Every one of my Western passengers has missed the train, and the White Cross is fifteen minutes ahead of us? What's it all about?"

"Why, I couldn't help it, sir," stammered Joe. "Jim Merton came on board at Westlake badly hurt. He wanted to get home and—and so——"

"And so you stopped for him, did you?" roared the colonel. "Well, you're a pretty specimen of ingratitude. Discharged."

"Wha—what do you mean, sir?" gasped Joe.

"What do I mean? I mean just what I say!" bellowed the colonel. "You are no longer pilot of the Red Cross, Joe Harri-man. You are discharged."

CHAPTER XVI.

WAR TO THE KNIFE.

If Joe had been struck by lightning he could hardly have been more surprised.

He had expected to be well berated by Colonel Millington, and he was prepared for it, but to have the command of the Red Cross taken away from him in such a summary fashion, took him entirely by surprise.

But Joe was plucky and proud in his way, too.

"Very good, sir," he answered quietly, and passing Colonel Millington, he walked on down the stairs, crossed the gang-plank, and with his head as erect as a drum-major's walked off up the wharf.

Now, as a matter of fact, this was a little more than Colonel Millington had bargained for. He had not really intended to discharge Joe, for he knew very well that it would be extremely difficult to replace the boy without putting the Red Cross in the hands of an outsider who knew nothing about Crooked Lake.

He had taken Joe up short to give him a good calling down, and Joe had taken him up equally short and left him with the steamer on his hands.

"I suppose Deb Sanders can run it back to Westlake," thought Joe. "Anyhow, I sha'n't."

By this time Joe was at the head of Beasley's Wharf, where the Red Cross always tied up, and he was just crossing the street, when Admiral Merton came hurrying off the next wharf and hailed him.

"I want to see you, Joe Harriman!" he called out. "Wait for me a moment. My legs are not as young as they used to be, but I will get there in time."

The admiral spoke in a bluff, hearty fashion, as he always did.

Although the magnate of Eastlake was in his way just as big a tyrant as his rival at Westlake, he usually had a pleasant way of accomplishing his ends, which, in the eyes of some people went for a good deal.

Joe halted and waited for the admiral to come up. Just then the boy was in a raging passion against Colonel Millington, and he rather enjoyed the thought that the colonel was probably watching him and would see him talking with Admiral Merton at the head of the wharf.

"Joe Harriman, what do you know about my boy Jim?" demanded the old "sea dog," hobbling up.

"Jim is probably home now, sir," replied Joe with a calmness that he was far from feeling.

"He was away all night without my special orders," said the admiral grimly. "I saw you land him at Eastlake wharf. Has he been with you?"

"He was with me part of the time, sir."

"And where was he the rest of the time?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you. I didn't ask him."

"How did he come to be with you, anyhow? Speak out, boy. Of course I know that you and Jim are not friends. This matter needs an explanation, and I think you are man enough, Joe Harriman, to give it to me right now."

"That's all right, admiral, but it is not my business. Let Jim and his own explanation. All I can say is he came on board the Red Cross early this morning slightly wounded. He asked me to land him at Eastlake, and I did so—that's all."

"Wounded?" gasped the admiral, turning pale. "How? Where? Anything serious?"

"He was shot in the thigh, sir, and I extracted the ball. As

to how it happened I would rather he told his own story, so please don't ask me any more."

The admiral was as white as a sheet now, but he controlled himself perfectly.

"I think I have the right to ask as many questions as I like," he said, "but you don't have to answer me, of course. Joe Harriman, did you shoot my boy?"

"I? No, indeed!" cried Joe. "That's the way a fellow gets it in the neck for trying to do a kindness. I risked my own life to help Jim, and because he wasn't able to walk I landed him at Eastlake, and lost my job for doing it. Jim was once my friend, and I don't think he was ever my enemy. I'd do the same thing for him again!"

Joe spoke excitedly now, and displayed a good deal of feeling. As he uttered the last words, he started to walk away, but the admiral caught his arm.

"Joe! One minute! It had nothing—nothing to do with this bank robbery?" he gasped.

"Ask Jim, sir, and let me tell you this, that I believe in advance every word he will say."

"Thank you," said Admiral Merton, quietly. "Thank you, Joe. Shake hands. I shall wait until I can see Jim for further explanation. About this job you have lost, I—"

"Joe, I want to see you! Come here!"

It was Colonel Millington, who had come noiselessly up behind them. He addressed Joe a good deal in the same way he would have spoken to a dog.

When Admiral Merton wheeled around and faced him, the colonel never even looked at him, but kept his nose high in the air.

"You can speak to me later," replied Joe, coolly. "What is it you want?"

"What is it I want? Why, I want you to take the Red Cross back up the lake, of course. What right have you to walk off and leave me so? What am I to do with this steamer on my hands?"

"That's not my business, Colonel Millington," replied Joe. "You discharged me. That's enough. I don't go on board the Red Cross again unless it is to get my things."

It was that for the colonel to haul in his horns, and he did it.

"Come here, Joe. I've got something to say to you," he said more mildly. "We can fix this thing up."

"Joe," said the admiral, twisting his nose, "I ran the White Cross down here from Eastlake, but I'm an old man, and it is rather hard work for me. I'll give you Betty Sanders to take her back."

"What do you mean, sir, by trying to hire my man away from me?" roared the colonel, stepping forward, angrily.

"What do you mean, you beggar, by addressing me in that tone!" shouted the admiral, twisting his nose right under the colonel's nose.

It looked like war to the knife between the rival steamboat owners of Crooked Lake.

Pilot Joe stood by and smiled.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOE AT THE WHEEL OF THE WHITE CROSS.

"Don't you shake your stick under my nose, Jim Merton!" roared the colonel.

"Don't you put your nose over my stick, Jim Millington!" sneered the admiral.

"You have no right to interfere with my business!"

"There I was wrong, I admit it. You are a purse-proud tyrant—that's what you are."

"You're another! What right have you to interfere with my business, I'd like to know!"

"The right of a free born American citizen to attend to his own affairs, sir! If you were not an old man, I'd break this stick over your back—that's what I'd do, sir! Yes, sir, that's what I'd do!"

"Hark!" shouted the colonel. "You are a very old man, you are not old!"

Up went the stick and up went Colonel Millington's fists, and there would have been a free fight then and there, had not Joe, who had been watching the whole proceeding, jumped in between them and separated the irate pair.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Respect yourselves!" he cried. "Don't fight over me!"

Colonel Millington pulled away, only too glad to retreat.

"Never mind, Joe Harrington! I go off your bad head, this very day!" he sneered. "This business will land you in jail."

"And I'll go on his bail bond for a hundred thousand dollars!" shouted the admiral, as Colonel Millington without deigning to make further reply stalked away.

"I think I had better go, too, Mr. Merton," said Joe. "I don't want to make trouble. I——"

"Stop, Joe! Were you regularly discharged?" asked the admiral, as quickly as though his temper had never been aroused.

"I certainly was, sir."

"Then take up my offer, and it may lead to a better one after we have a chance to talk to Jim."

"All right," said Joe, after a moment's hesitation, "but I won't take the fifty dollars. Three and a half a day is what Colonel Millington has been paying me. All I want is fair pay for my work."

"We will discuss that afterward," said the admiral. "I'm going up in town. Will you go right aboard and take charge? I'll give you a line to the mate."

And so it happened that when the rival steamers of Crooked Lake started on their up trip, Pilot Joe was at the wheel of the White Cross, while Beasley, the boat-builder, stood in the pilot-house of the rival craft.

Admiral Merton was with Joe, but he was not doing much talking—he never did when there was nautical business on hand.

"Who is that man at the wheel of the Red Cross, Joe?" was the first question after they had been some time under way.

"Mr. Beasley, the boat-builder, sir," replied Joe.

"Hark! Couldn't get anybody else to run the old tub, so he had to take up with his builder," sneered the admiral. "He won't get another pilot this side of Buffalo or New York."

"Oh, I think he will be able to pick up somebody," replied Joe.

"He's an old fool—— always was. If he hadn't been he would never have quarrelled with you."

"Pardon, sir," said Dick Hurley, the mate, coming to the window of the pilot-house just then, "but there are two gentlemen on board here who want to go to Westlake. They made a mistake and got the wrong boat."

"We don't stop at Westlake. Why didn't you tell 'em so?" snorted the admiral.

"I did, sir. They are badly cut up about it, too. One of them said these rival lines were a nuisance, and that no one could tell which boat to take."

Admiral Merton was just about to make a further reply, when he caught Joe's eye, and biting his lips, said very quietly:

"Well, what is it, Joe?"

"I don't want to offer any suggestions, unless you wish me to, sir," replied Joe, "but——"

"Out with it, boy! You need never be afraid to talk to me."

"If you want to break the colonel's heart, why, just make a regular stop at Westlake, and look for the business. You bet I would if I owned this craft."

The admiral thought for a moment.

"There's something in what you say," he replied, "but how about the railroad connections at Bowlersville?"

"I think that could be arranged by altering your timetable."

"I don't see how!"

"Give me time to think it over and I'm sure I can suggest a plan."

"Do it, then. Dick, tell the gentlemen we will put them ashore at Westlake—purely a matter of accommodation, mind. Now, then, Joe, if we don't beat the Red Cross, you and I will quarrel—that's all."

"I'll do my best, sir," replied Joe, but he did not have to. Beasley was doubtless a good boat-builder, but he certainly showed himself a miserable pilot on this occasion.

It was neck and neck as far as Pawpaw, and then the Red Cross ran on the Rip-Raps and had to back off, losing ten minutes' time, and searing the ladies half to death by nearly capsizing.

This enabled the White Cross to get into Port Judd ten minutes ahead, and there would have been no trouble in her beating her rival to Westlake if Joe had not suggested another change of program.

"She has stove a hole in her bow, sure!" he exclaimed, turning a glass on the Red Cross. "See how she lies in the water."

"You're right!" cried the admiral, seizing the glass for a look. "She's hardly in a safe condition to run."

"Let's take her passengers off!" suggested Joe. "Let's wait for her at Port Judd and offer to take them up for a change."

There was a merry twinkle in the boy's eye, for he saw far ahead.

"Immense!" cried the admiral. "I'll do the shooting. Hello! Look out for that sailboat! What in thunder is the fellow thinking about to cut in ahead of us that way?"

"Why, it's Jim!" cried Joe.

"By Jove! so it is!" roared the admiral. "He is heading straight for us! He wants to come aboard. Give the rascal the go-by, Joe. If he can't be on hand for duty, he needn't think I am going to stop the White Cross to accommodate him. I wouldn't do it if he was twenty times my son."

"I would if I were you," replied Joe. "See, he is hailing us. Admiral, there is something wrong."

The admiral turned pale.

"The bank robbery?" he said in a low tone.

Joe made no answer, but his silence was enough.

"Stop!" said the admiral, and stop the White Cross did. Jim made his boat fast and was helped on board.

His father did not go to meet Jim, and received him coldly when Jim came hobbling on deck, looking very much surprised to see Joe at the wheel.

"Well, young man, what have you got to say for yourself?" demanded Admiral Merton. "You see what you have forced me to do—put another man in your place."

"You couldn't have chosen a better one," replied Jim. "Father, I'm in trouble. I want to speak to you."

"Of course you are in trouble. You're always in trouble!" cried the admiral. "Spit it out. No secrets here. You were in Westlake last night. Are you mixed up with this bank affair?"

"Yes, I am," replied Jim, sturdily. "I have just run away from the constable to escape going to jail!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN JIM ARRESTED.

Captain Jim's startling announcement nearly took Pilot Joe's breath away.

After all, then, it seemed, he had not succeeded in concealing Jim's identity from the constable, but what surprised him most was the way in which the admiral received the announcement.

"I can't talk to you now," he snapped. "I've got other business to attend to here. We'll see about the matter later on."

Jim turned as white as a sheet.

"Father, you speak just as though you had decided on my guilt already!" he exclaimed. "I demand a hearing, I will not be treated so!"

"What below!" roared the admiral. "Discipline on board the White Cross must be maintained. You did not report for duty. That's a worse crime, in my eyes, than if you were charged with robbing a dozen banks."

This was all that was the matter with the admiral. He never questioned his son's entire innocence for a moment, but he was "bawling head" at the breach of nautical etiquette so to speak.

Jim walked slowly away, and Joe steered the White Cross straight to the wharf at Port Judd.

Here the freight was unloaded, and the passengers discharged. Everybody supposed the steamer would put right out again, but instead of that she held on, while Admiral Merton stood on the deck above the main gangway ready for business, as the Red Cross came limping up to the wharf.

"Joe! Oh, Joe!" said a low voice, close outside the pilot-house window, on the side away from the admiral.

There was Captain Jim looking in.

"Jim! What in the world! You here?"

"Yes. Nice state of affairs, isn't it, when my own father condemns me unheard."

"Oh, he doesn't mean that, Jim. He's only mad, that's all. When you get a chance to tell your story it will be all right," Joe replied.

"Maybe it will, and maybe it won't," said Jim, bitterly. "That's the way he always goes on."

"He can't mean anything by it, I suppose," returned Joe again.

"He'll find out what I mean, blamed sudden, then," replied Jim, fiercely. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Joe. I'm going to run away."

"Nonsense! You'll stay and face the music like a man. Look at the Red Cross! She ran on the Rip-Raps, there's a hole knocked in her bottom, sure."

"Don't try to turn me off, Joe!" cried Jim, fiercely. "Tell me what has happened. Tell me how you came to be aboard here. I want to know all about it, and then I am going to tell you just what happened last night."

"Don't!" said Joe. "Tell your father first, just as you intended. How is your wound? You run a great risk——"

"Stow that, Joe! If I only had one leg, I would have come here. Tell me what brought you on board the White Cross, quick."

Jim could be just as dictatorial as his father, if he tried, but there was no reason for concealment, so Joe told about the quarrel on the wharf, and his own discharge.

While he was still talking, the Red Cross tied up to the wharf.

"All aboard for Eastlake, Westlake, and way ports!" shouted the admiral. "Free passage for Westlake from Port Judd! All aboard! All aboard!"

Now, Admiral Merton had a voice like a fog horn, when he chose to exert it, as he was doing now.

Everybody on both steamers and the wharf heard him. Some laughed, others stared. Colonel Millington went storming about the deck. Joe and Jim could not hear what he was saying, but it was perfectly evident that he was assuring everybody of the perfect safety of the Red Cross.

Suddenly a party of four ladies—well-known Westlake people—started down the gangplank and crossed the wharf toward the White Cross.

"Ladies!" shouted Colonel Millington, "you are making a mistake. I assure you that the Red Cross has sustained no damage, she is perfectly safe."

"All aboard for Westlake!" bellowed the admiral. "Free passage from Port Judd. Don't risk your lives on that rotten

old tub, ladies and gentlemen! Paint and patches don't make a sound craft. Come aboard the staunch new steamer, White Cross. Free passage up the lake!"

Several others made a break and followed the ladies whom Dick Hurley was just helping on board.

Bob Sanders tumbled over the side, jumped to the wharf, and crossed to the White Cross.

"Look at that! Look at that!" roared the admiral. "The rats desert a sinking ship. Save yourselves while there is yet time, ladies and gentlemen! Free passage to Westlake, from Port Judd!"

Then there was a grand stampede.

In spite of all that Colonel Millington could say or do, two-thirds of the passengers came aboard the White Cross.

"Let her go!" roared the admiral, waving his hand to Pilot Joe.

Joe gave the engineer the bell, the admiral himself attending to the casting off, and the White Cross steamed out into the lake.

"I'll sue you for libel, Jim Merton!" bellowed Colonel Millington, as they swept past the rival craft.

"Come aboard, Jim, and save your skin!" retorted the admiral. "Don't risk that precious hide of yours on that rotten old tub!"

Joe was half bursting with laughter—he could not help it, and even Captain Jim, who still stood outside the pilot-house window, looked a little amused.

But his face changed when Sheriff Bergman, who had come aboard the White Cross with the other passengers, suddenly put in an appearance on the deck.

"By gracious, Joe, here's the sheriff! He's after me!" gasped Jim.

He was not mistaken either.

Mr. Bergman walked straight up to the pilot-house and clapped his hands on Jim's shoulder.

"I want you, Master Merton," he said. "There is a warrant out for your arrest."

CHAPTER XIX.

FRIENDS ONCE MORE.

It was a decided climax in the life of Captain Jim.

He had been arrested, charged with a terrible crime.

It was one of those cases where a boy must, of necessity, show his true nature, and let the world see whether he is a weakling and a fool, or whether he has within him the making of a man.

Jim came to the front nobly.

He turned pale, but his voice was steady, when he said:

"Very well, Mr. Bergman. I expected this, but I want you to understand that I am entirely innocent."

"That may be, my boy," replied the sheriff, kindly. "I've known your father for a good many years, and I should hate

to think that Admiral Merton's son had turned thief. It's a matter I have nothing to do with, however. You were seen last night in Westlake with the burglars. Mr. Coons chased you when he chased the rest. You must admit that all this requires explanation. At all events the bank directors have seen fit to swear out a warrant for your arrest."

"I do admit it," replied Jim, sturdily, "and I can explain everything. I'll do it now, if you wish."

"No, no! Don't talk," said the sheriff. "Every word you say will be used against you. Best thing you can do is to send for your father and let him know what has occurred."

Jim hesitated and stood for a few moments biting his lips.

"Will you go and tell my father, Mr. Bergman?" he presently asked.

"And leave you here? I've no right to do that, my boy."

"I sha'n't run away, Mr. Bergman. I give you my word."

"I'll be responsible for him," Joe ventured to say, for from his place in the pilot-house he could hear all that was being said.

"You!" exclaimed the sheriff, sarcastically. "I believe you have a little matter of your own to attend to, young man."

Joe flushed and returned to his steering.

"You can come with me to your father, Jim," said the sheriff, after a moment. "I don't want to put the handcuffs on you, and if your father agrees to go bail for you there will be no necessity for it. Ah, here he comes now!"

Admiral Merton came hurrying toward the pilot-house in high good humor.

"Joe Harriman!" he called out. "You have a great head! It's the best move we ever made. Here we have got two-thirds of the Red Cross' passengers aboard, and Jim Millington is the slickest man on Crooked Lake. This is the scheme. We must fix up a time-table to run the White Cross regularly, too, and from Westlake. We'll knock that old tub higher than Gilroy's kite. Ah, Bergman, how are you? Didn't see you before."

"Admiral, I'm quite well," replied the sheriff, "and I hope I see you the same. I—I have a little disagreeable business on hand here. Your son——"

"Arrested?" broke in the admiral, turning as white as a sheet.

"Well, yes!"

"On what charge?"

"It is connected with the bank robbery at Westlake last night. Of course he is innocent, but——"

"Stop!" broke in the admiral. "The innocence of my son is unquestioned, but if he is charged with crime it has to be proved. I am prepared to go bail for him in any amount."

"That's all right, then," replied the sheriff. "I will take him before the magistrate at once, when we reach Westlake."

"Thank you, Bergman," said the admiral, quietly. "Joe, you can run the steamer across to Eastlake, land your passengers, and return for me."

"Beg pardon," broke in the sheriff; "but he can't do it. I have instructions to arrest Joe Harriman, too."

"Arrest me!" cried Joe. "What have I to do with the bank affair?"

"Nothing. Colonel Millington has gone off your bail bond in the Stubbs robbery. He orders that you be returned to the custody of the court."

Joe was crushed.

Admiral Merton turned red and pale, by turns. He clenched his fist and ground his teeth and seemed to find it hard work to control himself, but he succeeded at last, and quietly said:

"Oblige me, Bergman, by letting Joe Harriman remain at his post. I'll go bail for him, as well as my son. Can it be so arranged?"

Sheriff Bergman thought it could, for he was particularly anxious not to quarrel with the admiral.

"I'll be on hand when we make the landing," he said. "I trust to your honor, admiral, to have your son ready to go ashore."

He walked away, and a painful silence followed.

"Father," said Jim, at last, "will you listen to me now? I am innocent, but I don't know that I can prove it without the help and advice of some one older and more experienced than myself."

"Jim," said the admiral, fixing his eyes sternly upon his son. "You shall have the best legal talent that money can procure; but you know what has happened in the past. You are my son and I shall not turn my back on you, but don't you dare to speak to me again until your innocence is proved!"

Thus saying, Admiral Merton stalked away, while poor Jim dropped down upon the seat which ran along the guard rail, and burst into tears.

A few moments Joe just attended to his steering without a word.

The White Cross was now well in advance of the rival steamer, and making good headway across the lake.

As soon as it was safe to relax his attention for a moment, Joe called out:

"Hello, old Jim!"

"What is it?" asked Jim, without looking up.

"Come here. I'd go to you, but I can't leave the wheel."

Jim got up and walked to the window of the pilot-house.

Joe quietly put out his hand.

"Let's be friends again, Jim," he said. "I believe in your innocence as much as I do in my own."

Jim took the hand of his old chum and pressed it convulsively.

"Thank you, Joe," he said, in a broken voice. "I am really innocent. My father is very hard with me. Do you know what? You don't answer, so I will tell you. I once stole five hundred dollars from him, and—and—oh, Joe! I have been a thief, and he knows it, but as true as Heaven hears me, I am innocent of this crime."

"I believe you," said Joe, emphatically. "and we will prove it. I've got an idea."

"What?"

"I saw three bargains pull away from Westlake wharf last

night in a small boat. They seemed to be making for Weasel Island. I suppose I should have told about it, but I thought I would say nothing until I had heard your story."

"Wait till you do hear it!" broke in Jim. "I've got something to tell you, too, Joe. I believe these stolen diamonds are hidden on Weasel Island. If I can't save myself from disgrace, at least, I can save you. Just you wait until you know all!"

"We will pull together," replied Joe. "No more talking, now, Jim. I've got all I can do to run the White Cross to Westlake wharf."

CHAPTER XX.

JIM TELLS HIS STORY TO JOE.

"Joe Harriman," said Admiral Merton, in his usual emphatic style. "I will give you five dollars a day to act as master of the White Cross until further notice. You will have to take up your quarters in Eastlake, or sleep on the steamer. If you are faithful to your work and succeed in running that mean scoundrel, Jim Millington, off the lake, I will do more for you. Don't decide now. Take time to think it over, young man. Meanwhile I expect you to look after the steamer, giving me at least two days' notice before you quit."

"Very well, sir," replied Pilot Joe. "I'll take the matter under consideration. I shall want to consult with my mother before I decide, and she is away just now."

"Very proper," said the admiral. "Do you sleep on board to-night?"

"I shall stay on board for a while, sir. I want to look the White Cross over, so as I may understand her better. Very likely I shall borrow one of her boats and pull across to Westlake, but I shall be on hand in the morning at five o'clock."

"Very good. We shall start as usual at half-past six. We won't attempt to go over to Westlake until we can arrange the time-table, and advertise the change in the papers, but hereafter the White Cross will always stop at Westlake on her up trip. Now, good-night."

Thus saying, the admiral walked off toward the big house on the hill without so much as looking toward his son, who stood on the main deck of the White Cross, leaning over the rail.

Pilot Joe went right aboard and put his arm around the neck of his old chum.

"It's mighty hard for you, Jim," he said, sympathizingly.

"It is," replied Jim. "It's the toughest nut I ever had to crack."

"Aren't you going home?"

"Never again until my father asks me, Joe, and perhaps not then," gulped Jim, turning his head away.

"Don't take it too hard, Jim."

"That's all right. I have been used to blame. I did rob

my father two years ago, but since then I—I have tried to—to——"

"By the way, Jim," Joe broke in, trying to help his friend out, for he saw how deeply his feelings had overcome him, "I spoke to your father about Bob Sanders. He says he will put him to work next week at the same pay he got on the Red Cross, and will advance him at the first opportunity."

"That's good. Bob's a good fellow."

"None better. The instant he found I had been discharged, he quit, and I appreciate it, although I think he acted foolishly."

"I don't. You'll be master of the White Cross, Joe, and Bob naturally wants to be with you. I think he did just right."

"I'll never be master," said Joe, emphatically. "I may be pilot, but I'll never be captain. That's your job, Jim."

Captain Jim brushed his hand across his eyes and seemed to pull himself together.

"Are you ready, Joe?" he asked.

"All ready."

"Let's take the boat and start then. I'll tell you my story as we are pulling for the island. It isn't a pleasant job we have undertaken, and it may be a dangerous one, but I think you and I are game for anything that may occur."

"You bet we are," replied Joe, and then the boys lowered the stern boat and pulled off up the Turkey's Neck, while the evening shadows were falling over Crooked Lake.

Matters had turned out about as Admiral Merton had planned them.

Sheriff Bergman and the magistrate at Westlake had shown the millionaire rival of Colonel Millington every consideration, for they had their own interests to look after, and had nothing to do with the quarrels of the rival magnates of Crooked Lake.

The charge was duly made against Jim of being concerned in the bank robbery, and bail fixed at \$5,000, for which amount the admiral promptly signed, at the same time pledging himself for the appearance of Pilot Joe, when the trial came up on the Stubbs case.

This settled the business for the time being, and the admiral and the boys left the courtroom together, but not a word passed between father and son then or afterward, which Joe justly considered very hard.

Joe was working the oars when they pulled away from the steamer, and for a short time neither of the boys spoke a word, but Jim broke silence at last, and with perfect calmness, and a good deal of dignity, told the story of his fishing excursion and of the happenings on Weasel Island, of which the reader is already informed.

Of course, Joe grew intensely interested.

"By gracious, I believe there is something in this!" he exclaimed. "You say they spoke of 'Stan' while they were talking of the diamonds?"

"They certainly did."

"And that diamond's name was P. Stanley Wall. I hear he has been missing ever since the Stubbs affair."

"So I was told. Do you know, Joe, my father half suspects me of the diamond robbery, too?"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, it's so! He did from the first, although he never said a word. See what it is to have a bad name? Hard, isn't it? But I must go on with my story. Those two fellows pulled over to Westlake in the boat, and they carried me with them, a prisoner, I'm ashamed to say, for I was not able to work myself free, and make my escape.

"When we reached there, we landed alongside of the lumber yard, and there we met two other fellows, and they took me up to the bank."

"And did you see the robbery?" broke in Joe, who had been listening with breathless interest.

"Every bit of it," replied Jim. "What they wanted me for, was because I am small. They cut out the glass in that little round window which opens through the bank wall into the alley; it's a ventilator, you know."

"I know! Go on!"

"Well, they made me crawl in there. I stood on the shoulders of the tallest of the four, got in through the window and dropped down inside."

"And opened the door, Jim? Oh, how could you?"

"Well, I guess you would have done it if you had been in my place," said Jim. "Chris took my place on Dolby's shoulders, and there he stood with a dynamite bomb ready to throw at me if I refused. Anyhow, I let the bars down and shot the bolts and they had false keys which did the rest. After that I had the pleasure of seeing a bank burglary. They bored into the safe and blew it open. The explosion was heavier than they thought it was going to be, and there was just time to grab what money was in sight and light out. You know the rest, Joe, so there is no need of my telling it. Perhaps I have been weak and ought to have managed somehow to get away from those scoundrels, but I certainly am not a thief. Now, then, what do you think of it all?"

"I don't believe I should have done any different, Jim."

"I don't know about that. I haven't the courage you have, Joe, and since my father—Look! Look, Joe! There's a boat making for Weasel Island, now! If that isn't Chris pulling at the oars, I'm blind!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GHOST OF WEASEL ISLAND APPEARS AGAIN.

"Quick! Pull in behind the old Traveler, Joe!" Jim Merton added to his sudden exclamation. "He don't see us yet, and he mustn't, or we will have a fight right on our hands, sure!"

But instead of obeying, Joe turned the boat directly toward Weasel Island and ran it in among the bushes and then shipped his oars.

"What in thunder did you do that for?" demanded Jim, with something like his old tyrannical manner. "Why didn't you do what I said?"

"He's not going to Weasel Island. He's heading straight for the Traveler, and if I know anything, he means to go aboard of her," Joe replied.

"By thunder, I believe you are right. That is just what he means to do. It can't be that the burglars are hiding there, Joe?"

"It's mighty like it. Say, Jim, it would be just about the safest place they could pick out."

"Well, that's so, if they mean to hang around here. I made sure they would skip out or get over on to Weasel Island."

"I figure it out this way," said Joe. "For some reason or other they believe the diamonds are hidden in the old tannery, and they don't mean to leave until they get them. During the day they can't dare to show themselves, for fear some one might be fishing around the island and get a sight of them; and they are waiting for night to try again."

"What the ghost?"

"Probably they have decided not to be scared at the ghost. Besides there is Dolby. He was wounded, and very likely can't travel. What better place could they find to hide, than the old Tannery, where a wounded man could be made comparatively comfortable? I tell you, Jim, we have got work to do here, and it may let us both out of our trouble before we know it."

"I believe you are right," said Jim. "What do you propose?"

"Go straight to the old tannery now, while we know that at least one of the burglars is not there. We'll tackle the fellow and get the diamonds if they are to be had."

"I'm with you," cried Jim. "Pitch in! If we don't make the first thing morning I turn my back."

The boys then landed on the swampy shore of Weasel Island a little ways from the wreck of the Traveler lay, hard and fast, in the Turkey's Neck.

They watched the boat as long as they could see it, but it soon disappeared behind the wreck and did not come into view again.

"We will go right for the old tannery," said Joe, after waiting a few moments. "I haven't the least doubt that your friend Dolby has gone aboard the Traveler, and if he has, he is not to stay there for a little while."

"If he is there, the back track must be there, too, Joe."

"It might follow, but I think it is very likely. Jim, I would give my right hand to see you get straight with your father. But under the circumstances I think we ought to tackle the tannery first."

"You say so," said Jim. "I'll do just as you say," and they slipped past the wreck and soon found themselves in the narrow path which Jim had followed the night before.

It was a dismal scene. The tall swampy weeds were all about them, and not a sound was to be heard except the chirping of the crickets and an occasional creak of a gallinule which startled them to be careful and not step off the path.

"Look out for snakes, Joe!" whispered Jim. "There used to be blow adders and copperheads in this swamp."

"I'm no more afraid of snakes than I am of ghosts," replied Joe. "But I am mighty sorry about those burglars creeping up behind us now. Jim, you will keep up a sharp lookout."

"You bet. That's just what I'm doing."

"How much further have we got to go?"

"Not far. Hark! Didn't you hear something then?"

"I thought I did. It seemed as though something was moving among the bushes. Hold up! We'll listen a second."

But there was no need of stopping.

The words were scarcely uttered when the bushes were suddenly thrust aside and a strange figure sprang out in front of the boys.

"The ghost!" gasped Jim, and so it was.

There it stood facing Joe, the same fearful-looking object, big staring eyes, horns, tail and all!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STOLEN DIAMONDS LOCATED AT LAST.

Pilot Joe was not the sort of fellow to be deceived by a pasteboard mask and an old cow's tail—not he.

He made one rush for the terrible spook and caught it by the throat, forcing the grewsome figure down on its back.

"Lay hold here, Jim! Lay hold here!" he cried. "We will make short work of this snoozer, whoever he is."

"Don't kill me, cap! Don't kill me! You know me!" the spook blurted out, in decidedly human style.

Captain Jim got hold of one arm and Pilot Joe the other and jerked the figure to its feet. The mask dropped off all crushed out of shape, and a rather good-looking young fellow, dressed in ragged, dirty clothing, stood revealed.

"You know me, cap! You know me!" the boy kept saying, but Joe, whom he addressed, did not know him at all and could not imagine who he was, until he and Jim had dragged him out of the swamp to the clearing, where the old tannery stood.

Here the moon struck full upon his face and Joe recognized him as his tramp passenger on the Traveler on the day of the diamond robbery, the boy who had refused to pay his fare and who had given the name of Natty Du Flow.

"I know you now," he said. "You were on my boat the day of the wreck."

"Yes, yes," chattered the boy, who seemed to be little more than half-witted. "You were good to me. You didn't throw me overboard because I had no money—you didn't even say you was going to. I wish you would help me now. I want to go home now. I'm tired of staying in this place. Say, cap, do you think he will ever come back again? Do you think he ever will?"

Joe saw that the boy was terribly excited. He gave Jim

the wink to say nothing, but to let him manage the affair. "You are talking about Mr. Wall, I suppose?" he replied, very quietly, but at the same time keeping a firm hold on the boy's arm.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Wall—Mr. Wall!" chattered Natty Du Flow. "You see, I met him on the road, and he was good to me. Two or three times he was good to me and gave me enough money to get something to eat, and once he took me to the hotel with him—that was in Syracuse—and got me a room, so you see I had to do what he told me. I hope I haven't been doing anything wrong."

"Natty," said Joe, "sit down here and tell us all about it. We will help you. I don't think Mr. Wall will ever come back again, from what I heard."

"I began to think so myself," replied the boy. "It's so long since he went away. Why, I have been here ever and ever so long now. Ever since the accident to the steamer—you remember the time."

"Very well," replied Joe, "but you were going to tell us about Mr. Wall."

"Why, it's like this," replied Natty. "He came to me after the accident and told me we were all going to be drowned, and that he wanted me to go ashore with him in a boat, and I did, and he brought me here and hid his baggage, and told me to stay and watch it till he came back."

Joe's heart gave a great bound.

For a long time he had felt certain that Mr. P. Stanley Wall was the diamond thief.

Had the time at last come when he should be able to prove it? Certainly it looked very much that way.

"And you have been watching the baggage ever since?" he asked.

"Ever since," replied Natty, "except when I had to go over to Eastlake in the boat to get something to eat. He gave me a lot of money—twenty dollars—so I didn't have any trouble about that. I'd go over early in the morning or just at night and buy potatoes and meat and cook them. Then I caught fish, and there's berries here in the swamp. Oh, I haven't gone hungry, but I'm getting tired of it. I don't want to stay here forever. Would you?"

"Certainly not," replied Joe. "You have waited long enough. Did Mr. Wall tell you to play ghost if anybody came?"

"Yes. That's what he said."

"Did he give you the mask and that tail?"

"We found them here in the building, and Mr. Wall told me I must use them. Two or three times I have scared fellows off. That fellow was here once, and I scared him," and Natty pointed to Captain Jim.

"No, you didn't!" cried Jim. "I wouldn't have run unless I had to. Have those men who were with me been here again?"

"Not since," replied Natty, shaking his head vigorously. "Not since, but I thought they were coming when I heard you moving through the swamp. That is why I came out to see who it was."

"That's all right, Natty. Now we will take care of you,"

said Joe. "We will take you aboard our new steamer and give you a job, but we want that baggage. Do you know why?"

Natty nodded.

"I can guess," he said. "The diamonds."

"They are there?"

"Yes, sir. You bet!"

"Did you know that Mr. Wall stole them?"

"Yes, sir, you bet! I saw him take them in the jewelry store. 'Don't say anything about it and I'll get you a job,' he said to me, so I didn't, but I suppose I ought to. I won't get arrested, will I? Say, I don't want to be taken up."

"We'll look out for that!" replied Joe, burning with excitement. "Come on, Natty. Show us where they are and you have nothing to fear."

Natty led the way into the old tannery and passing to the extreme end of the lower room pulled up a trap-door in the floor.

Upon entering the building he produced an old lantern, which gave them light enough to see what they were doing, and when he held it down into the opening Jim and Joe found themselves looking down into a round hole just about big enough for a slight-built person to crawl through.

"They are down there," said Natty. "That's where he put them. The diamonds are down in that hole."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DODGING THE BURGLARS.

"It's an old well," exclaimed Joe. "There used to be a pump here. Can you get through that hole, Natty?"

"Of course. I took them down there. I guess I ought to be able to bring them up again," replied the boy. "Shall I get them now, captain? I am not going to wait any longer for Mr. Wall to come back. I'm going to do just as you say."

"You had better if you want to keep out of jail," said Jim. "Hurry up! We shall have those other fellows to deal with in a moment."

"I won't do it for you, anyhow!" flashed Natty, and for a moment it looked as though Jim's ill-judged remark was going to make trouble, but Joe soon quieted the boy down, and while he held the lantern Natty slipped into the old well, which had long since dried up, and passed up two big pigskin grips as heavy as iron, each one of them, and all bulging out with the goods which had been squeezed inside.

"How in the world are we going to open them to see if the diamonds are there?" questioned Jim. "They are locked."

"No, they are not," replied Joe. "They are only fastened with the catches. Here, hold the lantern! We will soon see if we have hit it straight or not."

Joe had the grips open in a moment. One was filled with jewelry samples, the other contained Mr. P. Stanley Wall's clothes, and underneath them were Miss Millington's wedding diamonds lying in the original velvet case, undisturbed.

"Hooray!" cried Joe, jubilantly. "That lets me out! By George! this is a great find!"

"There's some one coming!" exclaimed Natty. "I hear them outside!"

"Douse the glim, Jim! Quick!" whispered Joe. "If it's your friend Chris we will give him a warm reception. That's right. Not a word now! It's all coming our way. Leave everything to me."

That it took downright courage on Joe's part to crouch there in the dark and wait for the enemy there is no denying, but Jim was also ready and willing to do his share.

The grips were hastily closed and deposited in a corner, and the three boys stole toward the door through which the light came streaming, each armed with a board which Joe had torn up from the rotting floor.

The approaching footsteps could be distinctly heard outside.

There was no doubt, whatever, that some one was coming through the swamp, and Joe's heart sank when he came to know by the sounds that instead of one man there was at least three.

"Jim," he whispered, "this thing isn't going to do. The risk is too great."

"You're right. There's a lot of them, and the probabilities are that every one of them is armed."

"That's what I was thinking. I'm going to try a bold move, and it's as much for your sake as for my own, old man. We must get the bank money to set you right. We just must. I'm going to let the grips go for the present and take our chances of getting them back again."

"Just! Are you crazy? Would you give the diamonds up without a struggle now that you have got them?" Jim asked.

"Indeed I won't. The diamonds are in my pocket. You didn't see me take the case out—you were looking the other way. Let those fellows come in. We will slip out and make for the Traveler while they are fighting over the grips. We shall only have the wounded man to deal with and I guess there won't be much trouble in making him give up the swag."

It was a bold plan of Joe, but the first part of it was carried out without a hitch.

It was only necessary for him to explain what he meant to Natty Du Flow to win the boy's ready assent.

So the three stood in the shadows alongside the door and saw the burglars come in.

They had the way and there were two others who came behind him.

Joe told Joe afterward that they were the two burglars who had taken them at Westlake Wharf the night before, and who jumped over the fence when the constable chased them and made their escape.

"Hold up!" growled one. "Where's your ghost, Chris. This place is plenty enough, but I reckon ghosts won't trouble us here, seeing that we hain't been up against the bottle like you fellows were last night."

"No, there's no ghost," replied Chris, shaking a bit nervously. "I don't see any, we don't. But I hain't afraid. What's the matter with you? You're just a little bit nervous, that's all. You can fight 'em, and I mean to get 'em, too, ghost or no ghost."

A coarse laugh was the answer, and one of the men began fussing with a dark-lantern, which did not seem to work very well.

While he was thus engaged, Captain Jim, Pilot Joe and Natty Du Flow quietly glided out through the door.

As the backs of the burglars were turned, no one saw them, and the boys, taking to their heels, ran off through the swamp, keeping up the same hasty retreat until they came to the shore of the Turkey's Neck.

"There's their boat," panted Joe. "Let's take it. We'll have them prisoners on the island then."

"No, there's my boat, the one we stole from the Traveler," said Natty Du Flow.

"That settles it," said Jim. "We shall have to try some other scheme."

"Leave it to me," replied Joe. "I've got an idea. We take this boat now, and if the court knows herself, and I think she does, we shall have the bank money in our hands in ten minutes' time."

"Joe, you are great!" said Captain Jim, "but it seems like hoping against hope. Do it, though, and your fortune is made, for I know my father well enough to be sure that he will never rest until he has sent you to the top of the ladder, and that's right."

"Get into the boat," replied Joe. "What I'm doing, I'm doing for you, Jim Merton. I want no rich man's patronage. I've paddled my own canoe up to date, and I hope to be able to do it till I die."

Thus saying, Joe threw out the oars and pulled off toward the wreck.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Give me a boost, Jim. I can't quite catch the deck."

The boat was alongside the Traveler now, but the water in Crooked Lake had been running low lately, which left the steamer a little too high on the rocks for Joe to reach.

Captain Jim fixed that, however, for he boosted Joe just as he had done many a time in their schoolboy days.

Once on the deck, Joe helped Jim and Natty up and they stood there in the moonlight, listening.

"My theory is that your man, Dolby, is here, Jim," whispered Joe. "He was certainly wounded, and since he was not with the others I believe if we want to find him we haven't got far to look."

"Hold up," said Jim. "This is my job. I'll bet you what you like I know where he is."

Jim was thinking of the captain's stateroom, and he tiptoed toward it, followed by Joe, while Natty Du Flow, acting under orders, remained to watch the boat.

"Better let me go ahead, Jim," whispered Joe.

"No," said Jim. "I'm going. As I said before, this is my job."

They had now reached the captain's stateroom, which was on deck, well forward, and as Jim passed a voice called out from inside:

"That you, Chris?"

"No; it's me!" cried Jim, flinging open the door of the state-room.

Whiz! went a bullet past his head, for Dolby, who was lying in the bunk, had his revolver all ready.

Jim made one jump for him, wrenched the weapon away before he could use it again and turned the muzzle to the wounded robber's heart.

"We have you now, Dolby!" he cried. "Where is the bank money? Speak out quick, or I'll blow a hole right through your body! I mean business, man!"

"Hold on! Don't shoot! I cave!" gasped Dolby. "I'm too sick to stand up against you fellows. The stuff is under the mattress here. I told Chris how it would be if I was left a'one."

And then the boys found the stolen bank money after they helped Dolby out of the bunk and laid him on the floor.

It was spread out over an old sheet, but the bag lay under the bunk, and the boys lost no time in tumbling the money into it.

They had scarcely done so when Natty Du Flow came hurrying in to say that two small boats, filled with men, were coming down the Turkey's Neck.

"Sheriff Bergman and Constable Coons, as I'm a sinner!" cried Joe, when they reached the rail and looked off upon the water. "This way, sheriff! This way! We've got the bank money! Hooray!"

Great was the surprise of sheriff and constable when they came aboard the Traveler and heard what the boys had to tell.

"Jim Merton, I congratulate you," said Mr. Bergman, heartily, "and you, Joe Harriman. You are dead in luck and no mistake. I got the tip to-night that some men had been seen hanging around the wreck here, and so we came over; but I never expected to see you. It's just great! We'll get over to the island and lay for those fellows among the bushes. I don't doubt that we shall be able to nab them when they come out of the swamp."

And so they did, and as it was done without the least trouble there is no necessity for entering into a particular description of it here.

Unknown to the boys, the sheriff's party had been waiting for them before they knew where they were at.

It was a clean sweep, and Captain Jim and Pilot Joe, with their boats, helped to pull them over to Westlake, where they were safely lodged in jail.

Sheriff Bergman took charge of the bank money, and Joe also delivered the diamonds into his hands, for he felt that he wanted to have as little to do with the matter as possible.

All being settled, he and Joe, taking Natty Du Flow with them, returned to Eastlake and spent the remainder of the night on board the White Cross.

As soon as it was daylight Captain Jim went home. He preferred to see his father alone, and just what passed between them Joe never knew.

Promptly at seven o'clock Admiral Merton came on board the White Cross, accompanied by his son.

Joe met them at the gangway, and the admiral held out his hand.

"Thank you, Joe Harriman," he said. "You have saved my son. No need to talk about this, young man. You are a noble fellow. I shall not forget. That's all. Now start things up. Jim is captain and you are pilot till further orders. I'm not going down to Bowlersville to-day."

It was quite useless for Colonel Millington to try to stand up against such a team.

The colonel tried to act handsomely. He wrote Joe a letter of apology, and, thanking him heartily for recovering his daughter's diamonds, offered him his old place on the Red Cross at advanced pay.

Joe replied briefly, declining the offer, and then came a check for \$500 as a reward for recovering the diamonds, which Joe had the good sense to promptly return.

This settled it, and the colonel made no further overtures, but hired an experienced captain in Buffalo, and the war between the rival steamers waged fiercely for three months, when Colonel Millington finally gave it up.

The rival steamer was always behind until finally she could get neither passengers nor freight at Bowlersville or the way ports, and even the Westlake trade began to drop away, for the White Cross called regularly there.

So the Red Cross was sold and things returned to their original way when only one steamer plied on Crooked Lake. Joe Harriman still runs the White Cross.

He is master and pilot both, for Jim has gone to Europe with his father and no one knows when they will return.

Bob Sanders is mate and Natty Du Flow is steward of the White Cross, which has become an immensely popular steamer.

Long since the burglars went to State's prison, and the story of the diamond robbery explained by Mr. P. Stanley Wall, who was found in jail at Syracuse under another name, under charge of robbery in a Utica jewelry store, has become ancient history and is well-nigh forgotten.

But at Eastlake and Westlake, Bowlersville and Port Judd, people still talk about the long fight of the rival steamers, and tell of the doings of Captain Jim and Pilot Joe.

Next week's issue will contain "PETER, THE WILD BOY; OR, LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON." By Allan Arnold.

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THE CASTAWAY.

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

I shipped as second officer of the clipper bark *Potomac*, bound from Baltimore to Callao. The crew were about as ruffianly a lot as I ever put eyes on. Two or three colored men, some half-breeds, two Americans, and a Spaniard, completed the number. It was a difficult matter to rule

However, our captain gave himself little concern. He was an old sailor, and no doubt had often shipped what I may well call these scourings of the seas.

His plan was evident. It was to govern with a rod of iron.

The chief officer ably seconded him. Neither man seemed to have the least fear. Stern discipline was preserved. Any hesitancy in obeying a command, and a blow from the mate followed.

However brutal and debased the men were, their treatment was more than flesh and blood could stand.

I saw ominous signs from day to day. Every order was obeyed sullenly. Muttered threats could be heard. I spoke to the captain on the subject, and told him I feared ere long the crew would mutiny.

He laughed heartily. "Mutiny!" he said. "No, sir. The first man who disobeys I'll shoot down like a dog. Don't talk of mutiny on my ship!"

I was disgusted with him. I foresaw an evil thing, which I was powerless to avert.

At length another storm came.

The weather for days had been exceedingly dirty. The ship had driven along in a terrific gale of wind. For quite some days the sea was full of debris, and the men were wet through from morning to night. At length the weather moderated.

The sea was calm and the sun was looking forward to a day of comparative brightness. The men were looking things.

The first thing in the morning the captain said to me: "Mr. Scott, put all hands at work sail mending." I knew there would be trouble. At no time is this a pleasant occupation; after days of unrelenting toil it appeared to the crew doubly irksome.

The crew growled furiously, but none openly disobeyed. For a time all went well. Then Pedro, the Spaniard, threw down his work with an oath and refused to resume it at any command.

Of course I reported him to the captain. The latter was of a towering passion. He walked rapidly up to the ruffian, looking Spanish. "Take up your work, you scoundrel!" he shouted.

Pedro never moved.

Once more the captain repeated the order. This time the man fully obeyed. In a moment the captain seized a pistol from his belt and held it to Pedro's head.

A moment came when his friends, in various manner, "What does he do that for?" and the captain, who was by this time beaming with rage. No one spoke.

Then going over to Pedro put in irons and

turned into the black hole. He turned and walked back to the quarter deck.

After this, much talk in a low tone took place among the crew.

I was walking up and down the deck that night during my watch. The captain and mate were asleep below.

Suddenly I heard two shots from the direction of the cabin. At the same instant there was a piercing shriek. Instantly I ran in that direction, but before I had gone four paces a hand was placed on my shoulder.

"Stir a step and you die!" said my assailant, pointing a pistol at my head. Being unarmed, I had to submit.

Morning dawned and the crew mustered on deck. Their leader, a half-breed Spaniard, ordered me to come near.

"Scott," said the ruffian, "this ship is now ours. The captain and the mate, blame them both, are, as you guess, both dead. Well, we are going to run this boat in future. We've had a talk about you. Some of us reckon you ought to follow the others. Some don't. You see that land," pointing to the distant shore. "You see that boat," pointing to the small skiff which the men had just lowered over the bows. "We are going to put you on. Row yourself ashore, my good man. You'll find some pleasant companions, and I wish you a happy time."

Death was the alternative if I refused. But not for a moment did I hesitate. I would rather have gone to my death on shore than have stayed with these ruffians.

I was soon in the boat, the painter was cut and the ship sailed without me. I was alone on the ocean.

I examined the contents of the boat. I found a small bag of water and some biscuits. This was all the food given me.

The coast was about five miles off. Of course, I knew where I was. I was about to land in Patagonia. The natives bore a bad reputation, and I could only hope to avoid them. After a few hours' vigorous pulling I ran my little craft on the beach.

I wandered along the beach for a considerable distance. To my joy I found that several springs of water ran down from the rocks across the sand.

At length I came to a large cave in the rocks. I ascertained from observation that it was above high water mark. Here I determined to pass the night.

As dusk approached I laid down.

I omitted to say that the ruffians had supplied me with a pistol and ammunition. This former I placed at my side. I had also a strong knife.

I couldn't sleep. Every sound startled me. I fancied now and again I heard footsteps. But it was all fancy, due to my overheated brain.

How glad I was when morning came! Then I had a bath in the sea and felt refreshed.

After eating a few biscuits I started off to see the country. I moved cautiously, for I did not know what enemies were around.

I picked some fruit, which grew in abundance, and this refreshed me.

On I went, stumbling over rocks, pushing my way through prickly undergrowth, and lacerating my legs and hands severely.

Suddenly I heard a noise near me which alarmed me considerably.

At once I looked around, for I expected some wild animal to spring at me without warning. The sounds were near me, and I dared not advance or retire. Then I saw the long grass in front of me swaying about, as if disturbed by some living object.

Whilst I still gazed, with revolver in hand, to my horror I saw the folds of a gigantic snake.

Then, like a flash of lightning, the monster uncoiled, raised itself two feet in the air, gave a tremendous whistle and looked glaringly and fiercely at me with its sharp-pointed tongue.

The monster was not more than two yards from me. Every instant I expected the reptile would spring on me.

I raised my pistol and fired. The bullet went straight through the snake's head, and he fell dead almost at my feet. The snake was on the point of springing when I shot him.

For a few minutes after this marvelous escape I sat down on a rock and rested. The perspiration ran down my face in streams.

Then I went back as fast as I could to the beach. I felt, hungry as I was, I could not run the risk of another such fearful encounter.

Night came, and once more in the dark and gloomy recesses of my cave I sought repose.

Fearful after this of straying inland, I confined my wanderings to the shore.

One day I discovered some turtles, not very large ones, but still they would feed me for some time. I also managed to catch some fish. The sea was alive with them. I unraveled part of the rope attached to the boat and made a line, and with some wire fashioned a tolerable hook. Baited with a small piece of turtle, it was very successful.

I smoked a quantity of the fish and put it on board the boat. Then I pushed off, and determined to make my way up the coast. I fancied I had more chance of falling in with a vessel. On land my signal would not be noticed.

I kept always within a few miles from shore, where I landed every night. But one night was an exception. I thought I was going to the bottom. The wind suddenly rose, and I dared not approach the land. I should have been dashed to pieces in the surf. Nothing remained for me but to ride out the storm.

All day the storm continued. Toward evening the wind moderated, and I determined to land. I ran my boat into what I thought was a safe anchorage, and landed ashore. Then I tried to drag the boat out of the water. The sea was too high, and the waves beat with violence

on the boat. I was forced to give up the attempt. The boat was so high that the bottom of the boat was under water.

I was now forced to attempt to remain on land.

I went on my way, and was to journey northward. If I reached the ranges of the forest I would at least fall in with a party of white men.

On the way I journeyed on, feeding on fruit and nuts, and sometimes I succeeded in catching a bird. It was a tale of

the old days I had seen no trace of human beings. I was at last surprised when I discovered in the sand the footprints of many people, not far from where I slept on the previous night.

I determined to remain where I was until the next day, as I thought the natives would probably return into the interior and I could resume my journey in safety.

I was comparatively unarmed. My pistol would have been of incalculable service, but in the disastrous wreck of my boat all my ammunition was destroyed. I had now only my tiny knife, and a good stout club I had cut to depend upon.

One day an incident happened that came very near preventing this tale being written. I was standing near a clump of trees looking out toward the ocean. This I did from time to time, as I thought it was possible a ship might be in sight.

Suddenly, I heard a wild yell. Startled, I sprang aside. This saved my life. A spear whizzed past my head. Looking round, I saw, some thirty yards off, a hideous savage. He had hurled his spear at me and yelled almost at the same instant.

Armed with a terrible iron-bound club, he came bounding toward me. I pulled out my knife and prepared to sell my life dearly. When he came near the spot where I stood I jumped aside suddenly behind the tree near by. The impetus of the savage carried him a yard or two beyond me. Then, with knife in hand, I sprang right at him. Quick as lightning he turned, foreseeing my maneuver. My weapon struck his club and flew out of my hand.

I threw my arms around him. Then ensued a terrible struggle. My knowledge of wrestling proved useful. I was holding my own with the savage, and should have thrown him to the ground, when my foot caught in some obstacle and I fell, with my opponent on top. I could feel his terrible fingers clutching at my throat. I threw my right arm out and it fell on the knife. I grasped it and, using myself for one last effort, placed it in his breast. With a hollow groan the wretch fell over dead.

For weeks I still marched on. At last I fell in with a party of white men. Their kind treatment soon restored me, and before long I was once more back in a civilized land.

The Potomac and her crew went in for piracy and rendered themselves the terror of the Pacific. A United States frigate, which had long been searching for them, came up with them and poured a broadside into their ship.

The Potomac and all on board sank to the bottom of the sea.

In Belgium there are no fences. Neither are there hedges; as in England. The boundaries of the fields are raised up by fairly high earth banks, and the roads are cut out of them, as it were, so that when you are walking in the country you are down in a sort of valley, with low green banks on either side of you. The things that are chiefly cultivated in Belgium are the beet root, for making the cheaper kind of sugar, you know, and you can see field upon field of their reddy-green leaves stretching on either side of you as you walk along. Flax is also much grown over there, and in summer time the fields are such a pretty sight when the pale hue flax blossoms are out in full bloom. The green leaves are in the foreground, and the flax blossoms are in the background, like the car horns green and yellow.

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will make him scratch, roar, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

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1 1/2 inches wide and weigh from 7-8 lb. to 1 1/2 lb. They are made of heavy cold rolled steel, are beautifully ornamented, and cannot be opened until the full amount of their capacity is deposited. When the coin is put in the slot, and a lever is pressed, a bell rings. The indicator always shows the amount in the bank. All the mechanism is securely placed out of reach of meddling fingers. It is the strongest, safest, and most reliable bank made as it has no key, but locks and unlocks automatically. Price, \$1.00, \$1.00. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



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BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

Buenos Ayres has planted along its streets and over its parks no less than 142,000 shade trees within the last ten years, only for adornment.

The great collection of Frank Hals' paintings, now the principal pride of Haarlem, lay rolled up for about a century in an attic as worthless.

In Bernier's famous restaurant in Paris there is kept a cow which is believed to be the smallest in the world. It is five years old, and is only two feet high.

By the inserting of two mirrors between the lens and the plate a new long distance camera gets a focal length of forty-eight inches with but sixteen inches of apparatus.

Operated by a small motor driven by a dry battery is a machine invented in Germany to resuscitate persons overcome by gases which automatically pumps out the lungs and fills them with oxygen.

An orchestra of one-armed men is quite popular and prosperous in Portland, Ore. It is believed to be the only one in the world. Two men are required to play instruments which require two hands.

The dogs of Alaska are called Malemutes. They are a cross between a dog and a wolf, and work in harness soon after their birth. They do not bark, but have a peculiar howl. They have long hair, and can sleep in the open with the thermometer sixty degrees below zero. Their usual food is fish and seal blubber. They are fed once a day, usually at night.

To say that a young girl's eyes are as blue as sapphires is as absurd as it would be to say that her mouth is as red as velvet. Sapphires, no more than velvet, are exclusively one color. The sapphires of Ceylon run from a soft blue to a peacock blue, which last is practically green. There is also a red sapphire, sometimes called a Ceylonese ruby, a stone as precious as a Burma ruby. Besides blue, green and red sapphires, many fine ones are yellow and white.

An act of the time of Queen Elizabeth ordained that vagrants were to be "stripped from the middle upward and whipped till the body is bloody." Fourpence each was the recognized charge made by the "whipman" for every male and female vagrant who passed through his hands, but on special occasions this sum was exceeded. Says the constable's account of Great Staughton, Huntingdonshire: "May, 1691. Paid in charges taking up a distracted woman, watching her and whipping her next day, 8s. 6d." After whipping people according to the statute the authorities sometimes gave them a letter recommending constables and others "to be as charitable as the law permits."

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

Wyld—So Dyer's get-rich-quick scheme didn't pan out?
Mack—No, she refused him.

"I've bought an absolutely noiseless auto," said Mr. Newrich. "But, Hiram," exclaimed his wife, "if it doesn't make any noise, how are we ever going to attract attention?"

"He's so unlucky," said the Billville citizen, "that I verily believe ef he wuz ter hide from a hurricane in a storm-pit, a earthquake would come along an' swaller the storm-pit."

He—It is rumored that Mrs. Grassweeds is a woman with a past. She—I guess that's right. Judging from her make-up I should say her past covered about thirty-seven years.

Vicar's Daughter—Well, Mrs. Mulligan, did you go to church on Monday to see my sister married? Mrs. Mulligan—No, miss; I don't take no interest in weddin's—I've been to one.

"I'm in a quandary." "What is it?" "Flossie and May are both in love with me, and I don't know which one to marry." "Don't marry either of them." "Why do you give that advice?" "Both of those girls are friends of mine."

The Teacher—Where were you yesterday? Willie—I was home, sick, ma'am. "What was the matter with you?" "Ma said it was a disorder of the stomach, ma'am." "Well, was it bad enough to keep you home, Willie?" "Why, ma'am, you've often told us you didn't want any disorder in the school room."

The delegation from the factory employes presented their demands and awaited the answer of the proprietor. "Boys," he said, "you went out on a strike six months ago, didn't you?" "Yes, sir." "And two months ago you went out on another one?" "Yes, sir." "Well, it has been many a day since I played baseball, but I know the rules. You have called two strikes on me. I'm too old to run now, and if you call a third I'll simply go out—of business. See?" They didn't call it.

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